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"I" am not "I" anymore: Negation, Doubling and Identity in Roman Polanski's *The Tenant* and Max Frisch's *Stiller*

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Abstract

This thesis is a comparative study of Roman Polanski 1976 psychological thriller *The Tenant* and Max Frisch's 1954 novel *Stiller*. It explores the multi-layered and multivalent nature of the director's film and the author's novel by analyzing them through various theoretical lenses. While focusing on the (re)construction and destruction of the protagonists' identities, it unfolds the multiple levels of meaning pertinent to various literary and cinematic motifs, including the double, suicide, projection, and fiction making. The first chapter explores the dynamics of the conflict between the societal and personal identities of the protagonists. The second chapter highlights the defense mechanisms- i.e. doubling and projection- the protagonists adopt against the external assaults on their personal identities. The third chapter elaborates on the failure of the defense mechanisms and the ambiguities of the protagonists' final states.

Keywords

Roman Polanski, Max Frisch, *The Tenant*, *Stiller*, The Double, Projection, Suicide, Identity.

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Introduction

Orestes: “Foreign to myself—I know it. Outside nature, against nature, without excuse, beyond remedy, except what remedy I find within myself. But I shall not return under your law; I am doomed to have no other law but mine. Nor shall I come back to nature, the nature you found good; in it are a thousand beaten paths all leading up to you—but I must blaze my trail. For I, Zeus, am a man, and every man must find out his own way.”

— *The Flies*, Jean-Paul Sartre

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the intersection of one’s identity, its negation and doubling as delineated in Max Frisch’s 1954 novel *Stiller* and Roman Polanski’s 1976 psychological thriller *The Tenant*. Questions of identity, its constituents and the individual’s alienation from and by society are among the recurrent motifs of both Polanski’s films in the 60s-70s and Max Frisch’s novels written in the early decades after World War II, a time when the issues of human existence, identity and freedom dominated the theme of various forms of literary productions. The emphasis that their oeuvres place on the individual and her/his efforts to define reality, Polanski’s admitted fascination and influence by The Theater of the Absurd, and Max Frisch’s choice of an epigraph for his novel from Kierkegaard’s *Either/Or* connect both the director and the novelist to the philosophical movement dominant in the 50s and 60s: Existentialism.¹ While Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Gabriel Marcel, and Paul Tillich are the major figures in the Existentialism of this period, the nineteenth century philosopher Søren Kierkegaard is often considered the founder of this philosophical movement (Pamerleau

¹ When asked about the religious motifs in *Stiller* in an interview in 1984, Frisch admitted to have been directly influenced by Kierkegaard: “I wouldn’t go so far as to say the whole religious element in the book is not honest, but it’s rather an influence I had at that time from reading Kierkegaard, and it was more a reading experience than a real one.” Frisch, Max. “Max Frisch, The Art of Fiction No. 113.” Interview by Jodi Daynard. *The Paris Review*, 1989. Web. 20 Feb. 2016.

14).² In spite of the central role of religion, particularly Christianity, in Kierkegaard's philosophy, he rejects any "systematic attempt to find the truth by means of a complete, logical explanation" and instead focuses on one's subjective perception of the truth (14). This very shift; i.e. from the objective view of reality to its subjective conception, is the common ground on which all other existentialists, regardless of their theistic or atheistic worldviews, walk. However, academics, philosophers and critics have not been able to reach a consensus on a definition of Existentialism that could possibly serve as *the* definition. Nevertheless, the one offered by Pamerleau in his introduction to *Existentialist Cinema* seems to me to have best captured the essence of this movement whose profound influence can still be discerned in various realms of art, literature, and human life long after its heyday in the 50s and 60s. He defines Existentialism as that philosophical endeavour "which describes the human condition as it is experienced by the individual" (1). In other words, the dynamics and quality of what could be labeled and categorized as "the human condition" are determined by the individual's perception of his own *and* the external reality. However, one may wonder if the application of such a theoretical capacity is indeed plausible in the real world. This philosophical movement specifies that

[i]t is ultimately the responsibility of each individual to choose which values and goals will have significance. That does not mean that we are not affected by the social world, or that the values of others can hold no meaning for us. Rather, such values need not *determine* who we are; we are always free to choose otherwise. (13)

This freedom to *choose* who one could/would want to be is what is challenged in the novel *Stiller* and the film *The Tenant*. The protagonist of the former attempts to do so by renouncing a pre-determined way of being expected of him by others through an explicit negation of that identity, thus incessantly repeating and reminding others that "Ich bin nicht Stiller" ('I am not Stiller'). The protagonist of the latter, similarly, tries to assert his

² It is worth noting that nineteenth century figures such as Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky are also introduced as prominent figures of Existentialism even though they never ascribed this term to their philosophy and literary works (Pamerleau 11).

personal identity by detaching himself from and negating the identity externally imposed on him by reiterating “I am not Simone Choule.” However, their attempts to literalize the freedom to mould their identities the way they wish to are doomed to fail for this existential freedom proves to be but another idealistic, yet at times comforting, mirage.

The Tenant is Polanski’s quite faithful rendition of the novel *Le Locataire chimérique* by French writer, Roland Topor published in 1964. *The Tenant* is the final film of what is usually referred to as Polanski’s “Apartment Trilogy.” The term “Apartment Trilogy” is collectively used by many critics to refer to three of Polanski’s films; namely, *Repulsion* (1965), *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968) and *The Tenant* (Le Cain 122, Orr 6, Caputo 6, etc.). However, these films were not intended to form part of a trilogy by the director for as Caputo aptly puts it “the term ‘trilogy’ is itself merely a term of convenience resulting from the fact that here happen to be three films that share a common trait (a type of setting or narrative thrust, in these cases) that forms the focus of said reading” (67). *The Tenant* weaves and unweaves the protagonist’s merging into and out of the former tenant within the xenophobic space of a Parisian apartment building. The protagonist, Trelkovsky (Roman Polanski), is a well-mannered Polish émigré who is in search of an apartment in Paris. Upon finding a vacant unit in the apartment building belonging to Monsieur Zy (Melvyn Douglas), he is informed that its former tenant, Simone Choule (Dominique Poulange), has attempted to commit suicide by throwing herself out of the window. Having gone to the hospital in which Simone Choule is hospitalized, Trelkovsky finds her shrouded in bandages except for a gaping mouth lacking a front incisor. Upon looking at Trelkovsky and her friend, Stella (Isabelle Adjani), Simone Choule takes her last gasp by letting out a disturbing cry. With the death of the former tenant, Trelkovsky moves into his new, furnished apartment. However, he is immediately confronted with the hostile reactions of his neighbors who, even in the absence of any noise, accuse him of disturbing the peace and quiet of the building. Gradually, due to his fear of offending the neighbors, he abandons all his friends and tries to adhere to their rules. Finding himself reenacting Simone Choule’s habits and manners, he suspects that the neighbors are plotting to transform him into the former tenant so that he would, in a similar fashion, defenestrate himself. In order to outsmart them and avoid falling into their trap, he pretends to have adopted the identity of the former female tenant by wearing make-up

and feminine clothes, accelerating his transformation yet seemingly unaware that he is simultaneously running the risk of internalizing this pseudo identity. He continues the masquerade so long that he finally ends up reenacting the suicidal act of Simone while insisting that he is not Simone Choule but Trelkovsky. Doubling the bandaged Simone in the hospital, he finally emits the same grotesque scream he was once subjected to. It is worth mentioning that Trelkovsky's decision to outsmart his neighbors is explicitly mentioned in the novel. Having reached the conclusion that they are pushing him towards the same fate as that of the previous tenant, he consciously decides to play their game to his own benefit:

Depuis que Trelkovsky avait eu la révélation de la machination destinée à l'abattre, il prenait un plaisir douloureux à rendre la métamorphose aussi parfaite que possible. Puisqu'on voulait le transformer malgré lui, il leur montrerait de quoi il était capable tout seul. Il les battrait sur leur propre terrain. À leur monstruosité il répondrait par la sienna." (Topor 115)

Ever since Trelkovsky had become aware of the existence of a plot to destroy him, he had derived a morbid pleasure from making the transformation of his character as complete and perfect as possible. Since they wanted to make him into someone else in spite of himself, he would show them what he was capable of by himself. He would beat them on their own ground. He would reply to their monstrous plan with one of his own. (91)³

In the film; however, Trelkovsky's conclusion that his neighbors are plotting against him is not due to a lengthy reflection and reasoning as it is the case in the novel, but rather a sudden realization when he sees the glass roof is being repaired. Thus, Trelkovsky's cross-dressing in the film is more indicative of his fall into delusion rather than a strategy to beat his neighbors at their own game.

³ Unless otherwise stated, English translations of French quotations are taken from Francis K. Prince's translation of *Le Locataire chimérique*.

On the other hand, *Stiller* is the first of the three novels Max Frisch, the Swiss playwright and novelist, wrote on the theme of identity, with the other two being *Homo Faber* (1957) and *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* (*Gantenbein/A Wilderness of Mirrors*, 1964). The narrative fills up the interval between the narrator's being/not being Stiller and his becoming/being condemned as Stiller. The novel is divided into two parts: the first part consists of seven diary entries/notebooks that the narrator writes in prison about his life in America before being arrested by the Swiss police. He hopes that these narrations would convince his accusers that he is indeed not the man they take him for. The second part of the novel is the account of the public prosecutor who follows the life of the narrator, condemned to be Stiller in the seventh notebook, and reveals to the readers that he has finally resigned himself to a life of solitude and inactivity in the countryside.

The first part of the novel begins with its well-known opening sentence "Ich bin nicht Stiller" ('I am not Stiller'), with which the narrator denies right from the outset, and keeps attempting to refute until the seventh notebook, the accusation leveled by the Swiss police of being a man called Anatol Ludwig Stiller, a sculptor who has been missing for nearly 6 years. Continually insisting that he is not Stiller but James Larkins White, an American who has so far committed three murders, he is, nevertheless, confronted with people from Stiller's past -his wife, his mistress, his friends, his father etc.- none of whom fail to identify him as Stiller. In order to clear himself of such an accusation and prove he is who he claims to be, he starts writing his life story before his arrest and tries to assert his identity as James White. Thus, he narrates his adventures in America and Mexico while simultaneously reporting the accounts and events he hears from various people about the missing Stiller. Nevertheless, he constantly notes that his knowledge of such accounts does not mean that he is, in fact, the missing Stiller. By the end of the seventh notebook, he is obliged to accept the court's verdict, the evidence of his being the missing Stiller being too overwhelming to deny. In this sense, the whole narrative could be considered as the narrator's failed attempts to convince, or rather remind, his accusers of the biblical commandment that "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen" ("Thou shalt not make any graven images"). While this commandment forbids representing God through graven images, this interdiction is undermined to an extreme degree in "the age of reproduction" when "our experience of other countries, other times, other people, is

primarily shaped by mass media images, and mostly engraved in our mind when (or if) we encounter the ‘real thing’” (Koepke 50). Therefore, these “prefabricated images” not only serve as the defining factors in one’s perception of the other, but they also result in the impossibility of communication between one and the other when “the other is nothing but a projection of the self.” In this sense, *Stiller* conveys the impossibility of one’s freedom from the prison of these imposed images (50).

On one hand, while these two works introduce the issue of identity as an unsolvable enigma and indeed conclude that it remains so, what makes Polanski’s rendition a more proper choice than its eponymous novel for comparison to *Stiller* is the advantage that film, as a visual medium, inherently has over the novel as a verbal medium: its capacity to convey more details. In this regard, Pamerleau argues in favor of filmic narratives since

[f]ilm as a medium depicts narratives in ways that novels do not. A description of a novel, even one with significant detail, does not compare with a film in the sorts of details it delivers. Consider the visual information contained in a single frame, which would be impossible to describe verbally. (42- 43)

Accordingly, in *The Tenant* the negative weight attached to the apartment building and its residents, a microcosm representative of the larger society of France at the time, in transforming Trelovsky is more highlighted than in Topor’s novel, which corresponds to and parallels the negative image of Switzerland present in *Stiller*. Furthermore, bearing several of Polanski’s auteurist marks, the film contains elements that problematize the issues of identity and doubling to a greater extent than the novel. A marked example would be the Polanskian untethered camera in the credit sequence of the film revealing the concealed presence of the tenants behind curtained windows. Not only does this create suspense, an air of mystery and imminent horror suggesting “que nous avons à faire un personnage obscur et surtout ambigu, d’identification difficile” (Sandola 48) (‘that we must make an obscure and especially ambiguous character, difficultly identifiable’), but it also introduces right from the outset the pivotal role of the double in the development of the filmic narrative by momentarily depicting the reincarnation of

Simone Choule in Trelkovsky behind the apartment window. In addition, while the same untethered camera is used in the final scenes of *Repulsion*, *Rosemary's Baby* and *Chinatown* (1974) as a means of disconnecting and interrupting identification with the protagonists and moving away “from the carnage it witnesses” (Caputo 149), in *The Tenant*, it prefigures the ambiguity of the film’s final scene and gives a summary of the whole filmic narrative due to its employment in the credit sequence, thus “still within a diegetically ambiguous plane of reality” (149). Finally, Frisch’s novel and Polanski’s film have one layer of biographical doubling in common. One could take the narrator of *Stiller* as the double of Max Frisch both in their adventures in America and in their critique of the Swiss mode of living. Similarly, the fact that Polanski himself plays the role of Trelkovsky makes it possible to establish the same doubling association between Polanski the director and Polanski the actor. Not only do both Trelkovsky and Polanski bear Slavic names in French society, which even linguistically marks them as foreigners, but also the changes that Polanski has brought to the Topor novel strengthen one’s assertion that there indeed exists a doubling relationship between the diegetic Polanski-qua-Trelkovsky and the extra-diegetic Polanski the director. For instance, in the novel, when Trelkovsky is summoned to the police station due to his neighbors’ complaints, the superintendent inquires about the origin of his name, “Monsieur Trelkovsky. C’est un nom russe, ça?” (‘Monsieur Trelkovsky. Is that a Russian name?’ (97)) Trelkovsky replies by saying “Je crois, oui” (Topor 121) (‘I think so, yes’ (97)). However, the Trelkovsky of the film immediately and without the uncertainty conveyed by the phrase “Je crois” replies that it is a Polish name. In fact, this association is reinforced even further since Trelkovsky of the film does not say that “je suis né en France” (121) (‘I was born in France’ (97)), but that he is a “French citizen,” a status that he shares with Polanski the director and not with the Trelkovsky of the novel.

On the other hand, the literary oeuvre of Max Frisch, his novels, plays, Tagebücher etc., has one unique feature, that of offering “problems rather than solutions” (Koepke ix). Similarly, the open ended-ness of Polanski’s films, his auteurist stamp, and the blurring of the line between reality and hallucination typical of and depicted in his “Apartment Trilogy” confront the viewers not with a univocal corpus of films but one making any certain conclusion about the works and any attempt to pigeonhole the director nearly

impossible. Any possible solutions to these ambiguities and problems could not be offered should one look at these multi-layered works through one specific theoretical framework, in which case the analyses would be either mechanical re-readings of the texts or plain products of the imposition of a theory, ignoring the fact that the theory might create more interpretational dead-ends than entries by forsaking issues present at other levels of the texts. In addition, one could say that the issue of identity is indeed among those concepts so widely discussed, theorized and critiqued that its over-theorization has, in a sense, deprived every theory of the right to claim comprehensiveness. Said otherwise, due to the complexity inherent in pinpointing the *I* of an individual, the issue of identity has been analyzed from various, philosophical, psychological, anthropological and sociological perspectives, each outlining what each conceives of as *the* answer to this ambiguous subject. However, none of these attempts seems to have been able to give a comprehensive account of the dynamics involved in the formation of one's identity since any interpretational angle casts other contributing perspectives to the blind spot. Thus, one could argue for the complementary and dialectical relationship between these schools of thought rather than their interpretational autonomy. As a result, should one opt for taking the issue of identity as one's subject of study, one does need to look at its structure and constituting building blocks from various outlooks. These outlooks in this study constitute Psychoanalysis, Existentialism and Sociology. While each of these theoretical frameworks seems to be concerned with a different aspect of human life and existence, the fact that they have the individual at their core not only aligns them towards a common goal, that of shedding light on the dynamics of human identity, but also their focus on that which does not fall into the domain of the other makes them mutually supplementary. For instance, Existentialism has been criticized for a) taking the individual for its basis of determining and defining reality and b) ignoring the role of social, communicative interactions between individuals as formative of their societal identities (qtd. in Pamerleau 50). In this sense, the use of sociological theories would compensate for this failure of Existentialism. Therefore, considering the polysemic nature of the works considered in this study and the interpretational intricacy inherent in the issue of identity, and particularly in its negation, one needs to make use of various theoretical frameworks, which, though at times

seemingly incompatible with one another, finally contribute to the presentation of a clearer picture of the distressed individual holding onto every means possible to keep his/her personal identity. In other words, casting light on these means would require lenses of different theories and frames of reference. In fact, by deciding to incorporate various theories into my thesis, I do not so much wish to convey a tendency to go against the current academic approach, which requires the theoretical boundaries of any given study be rigidly defined so as to present more precise and concise results, but to attempt to put my texts and the problems they pose in the center and let various theories provide their spotlights. It is thus that for the purposes of this thesis, the issues of identity, doubling and the disintegrations of both will be analyzed from various theoretical and conceptual angles.

Specifically, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate the intersection of and the clash between an individual's personal identity and the identity society imposes on and expects of her/him; i.e. one's personal identity versus one's societal identity. In the event that the dynamics of these two identities do not land on the same ground, conflicts arise that would arguably affect various forms of the individual's socialization, such as the gendering of the individual and the sense of who he is. In the contexts of the works considered in this study, this conflict is manifest on multiple levels and through various formations. For instance in *Stiller*, the friction between these two images can be seen in the opposition between the narrator's Swiss identity and his artistic identity, or in his adopted American identity and his feminine attributes both in his marriage and affair. The latter, i.e. Stiller's failure in performing his masculine role, is pointed out through his constant references to the event of the non-firing of his Russian rifle during the Spanish Civil War. In fact, for Stiller, the symbolic meaning of this event overshadows its significance as both a historic and a historical event as he admits to Sibylle that

[n]un weißt du's ... warum ich nicht geschossen habe. Wozu diese Anekdote! Ich bin kein Mann. Jahrelang habe ich noch davon geträumt: ich möchte schießen, aber es schießt nicht - ich brauche dir nicht zu sagen, was das heißt, es ist der typische Traum der Impotenz. (269)

Now you know ... why I didn't shoot. What's the point of this story? I'm not a man. I've dreamt about it for years: I want to shoot, but the gun doesn't go off- I don't need to tell you what that means, it's a typical impotence dream. (230)

On the other hand, in *The Tenant*, the conflict is explicitly exposed in the split gendering, transvestism and cross-gender identification of Trelkovsky. Meanwhile, the mechanism that seems to promise a potential way of escape from this in-between-ness could arguably be the mechanism of doubling, making possible the identification with an alternative identity. However, since "the sight of the double freezes the self's relationship to itself in an image and that stasis itself replicates death" (Coates, *Doubling, Distance and Identification* 17), one's identification with the double indeed signifies one's identification with death. Hence, doubling becomes pyrrhic: it not only leads to the disintegration of the protagonists' identities, but also to their inevitable deaths, both in its literal and figurative senses.

In order to address these issues properly, my thesis is divided into three main chapters. In chapter one, the conflict between the protagonists' personal identities and the ones expected of them by their respective societies will be addressed. The possible origin, emergence, and delineation of such a conflict in the two works will be commented upon using three different, yet conceptually related, theories. I will draw upon Lacan's model of psychic development, Jean- Paul Sartre's existential philosophy in *Being and Nothingness*, and Erving Goffman's sociological concepts in *Stigma* and *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Lacan's psychoanalytic ideas provide the required theoretical context to trace back the existing conflict to the friction between the two ideal images formed during the Imaginary and the Symbolic phases of an individual's psychic development; the two ideals towards which the individual would strive throughout his life. Hence, the image of the mother introjected in the former would account for the feminine attributes of the protagonists, and the image of the father introjected in the latter would stand behind the formation of their masculine features. This theory is indeed fruitful not only in investigating the factors leading to the existing conflict, but also in exploring the feminine aspects of the protagonists.

On the other hand, the same conflict will be looked at using Sartre's existential concepts in *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre's ideas on the dynamics of the individual's existential freedom, the anguish over the obligation to take responsibility for one's freedom, and what he terms *mauvais foi* or bad faith would help characterize the narrator/Stiller's logic as one of flight; flight from accepting one's failure, one's past and indeed one's own self. Sartre's insights into the role of the other in shaping an individual's conception of who he is/must appear to be and the consequences of undergoing feelings of shame and embarrassment would provide the appropriate theoretical framework to investigate the formation of the conflict between Trelkovsky's subjective identity and his societal identity and to explore the causes of his transformation into Simone Choule.

Finally, I will explore the motif of stigmatization in *The Tenant* using Erving Goffman's sociological insights into the concept of stigma, which outlines stigmatization as a compelling force for the rejection of one's identity and the adoption of a new one, and the performative nature of social interactions due to which individuals become masked actors in different social settings. This perspective will allow me to consider the inevitability of Trelkovsky's rejection of his identity due to his need for acceptance by others as a stigmatized individual.

Having investigated the causes of the conflict between one's subjective and societal identities in chapter one, in the second chapter, I will shift the focus of the discussion to the protagonists' attempts to reconcile these two identities and keep themselves at a safe distance from this battlefield through mechanisms of doubling and projection. I will argue that the indeterminate in-between-ness consequent upon such a conflict compels the protagonists not only to adopt identities that stand at opposite poles to who they believe they are, but also to project onto others those aspects of their personalities that are not accepted by social norms. For instance, the narrator of *Stiller*, in an attempt to refute the image that his society and acquaintances have made of him, adopts an identity that is in stark contrast with the one externally determined by and imposed on him. Thus, he denies being Anatol Ludwig Stiller, a Swiss sculptor expected to adhere to the rigid rules of the Swiss society and perceived as effeminate by his friends. Instead, he chooses to be James Larkins White, an American macho man critical of Switzerland's conservative

mindset and its conventionality. Nevertheless, even in his American identity, he feels the burden of the very attributes for which he had been blamed before his flight to America. Therefore, in the anecdotes about his adventures in America, he creates fictional characters onto whom he can project those attributes. For instance, he projects the jealousy that he was constantly feeling towards the male admirers of Julika onto the mulatto's husband, his need for attention onto the cat he had to take care of, and his failure in the role of the good husband he was expected to be onto Isidore, the chemist who abandons his family without giving any explanations. Thus, in distancing himself from these fictional characters, he seems to be distancing his identity from Stiller's. Nevertheless, these fictional tales function doubly. Although they purge the narrator/Stiller from the negative image and attributes of Stiller, they reveal the presence of Stiller behind the mask of James White through their fictitious and imaginative quality. In *The Tenant*, on the other hand, Trelkovsky's transvestism and the merging of his identity into that of Simone Choule could arguably be seen as his attempts at eliminating the friction between his subjective and societal identities, while his possible schizoid mentality could be seen as the consequence of the mechanism of projection whereby he translates his own socially frowned-upon desire of cross-dressing into his neighbors' demonic intentions to transform him into a woman. In addition, the relationship between solitude and doubling will be explored. In *Solitude and its Ambiguities in Modernist Fiction*, Engelberg argues that in modernist works, one's confrontation with one's double results in "a reductive, self-reflexive image that reinforces solitude, leaving a Self burdened with fear, with a sense of vulnerable mortality, or with disgust" (42). In other words, the sight of the double and the individual's confrontation with the double yield and augment one's sense of solitude. It will also be argued that solitude -hence the inevitable exclusion and seclusion of the individual from the society- engenders doubling since it provides the self with a way of escape from solitude through splitting the self.

Finally, in chapter three, the inefficacy of these defense mechanisms will be discussed by considering the protagonists' suicide/attempted suicide, Stiller's inactive and passive life after the court's verdict, and Trelkovsky's scream and encounter with his double in the last scene. Firstly, the existential and absurdist motifs present in the two works will be discussed. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus introduces the issue of suicide as the

one “truly serious philosophical problem ... [that] [j]udging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy” (4). Whence, in this chapter, the protagonists’ acts of suicide/attempted suicide will be explored in relation to one’s existential freedom as a way through which one could achieve authenticity by controlling death. Secondly, it will be maintained that although Stiller’s attempted suicide and Trelkovsky’s suicide are indicative of the total disintegration of their identities and the failure of doubling as both a defense mechanism and a substitute suicide, they could also signify their final protests against the imposed conformity. It will also be noted how such disintegrations are prefigured and delineated in these works. For instance, in *Stiller*, the hyperbolic quality of his fictions about the narrator’s American identity conveys the fictitious nature of this identity whereas Trelkovsky’s encounter with his own double early on in the film is suggestive of the belief that the double is the harbinger of death (Rank, “The Double as Immortal Self” 76), a fate whose actualization is but a matter of time.

Chapter 1

1 The Conflict: The Case of the Two 'I's

Trelkovsky: "I am not Simone Choule."

Stiller/ White: "Ich bin nicht Stiller. "

Thus the protagonists of *The Tenant* and *Stiller* set themselves apart from the identities others expect them to conform to. Their renouncing attitudes, in fact, have developed out of their consistent resistance against the identities they perceive to be alien vis-à-vis who they believe themselves to be. The resulting alienation from and the conflictual relationship with the societal identities expected of them are at the core of *The Tenant* and *Stiller*. On the one hand, this sense of alienation could be, in part, due to the protagonists' status as foreigners in their respective societies. Though a French citizen, Trelkovsky is always reminded of his foreign origin by the people he interacts with. The narrator of *Stiller*, who is proved to be a Swiss sculptor based on all social documentation and testimonies of his acquaintances, considers himself a foreigner in Switzerland and hence maintains that he is not a Swiss but an American. On the other hand, the protagonists' reactions towards the expectations of their societies could also play an important part in triggering this sense of disharmony and alienation. Whereas in *The Tenant*, the alienating conflict arises because Trelkovsky attempts to fit in the society, "strives towards assimilation while fighting against his second-class position created by society ... [and] experiences dissimulation through his efforts to belong" (Ain-Krupa 99), in *Stiller*, it emerges as the result of the narrator/Stiller's rebellion against the "ceaseless external assault" on his identity (Pender 127). Therefore, while Trelkovsky accepts and tries to abide by the expectation, e.g. he accepts wearing slippers after 10 pm as the previous tenant did in order not to make any noise and thus have his presence tolerated by other tenants, the narrator of *Stiller* "finds it difficult, if not impossible, to envisage any form of accommodation with the forces against which he sees himself pitted" (127). Aware of the multiplicity of the images others have made of him and their contradiction with what he believes his inner, subjective identity to be, he is obliged to keep resisting the imposition of those images and insisting on asserting his own individuality. This

determination to assert his individuality makes him highly cautious so as not to give any explicit clues that would enable others to impose the identity of the missing Stiller on him. For instance, when drawing with a twig in the sand, he reminds himself that “[n]ur darf ich nie vergessen, meine Striche jedenfalls mit dem Schuh wieder auszulöschen, ansonst halten sie's für Kunst und sehen wieder ein Indiz darin, daß ich der Verschollene sei” (41), (‘But I must never forget to rub out my scribbles with my shoe, otherwise they will take them for art and see in them further proof that I am the missing man’ (32-33)).⁴ Nevertheless, his writings/notes betray him and reveal that he is not necessarily the James White he claims to be.⁵

Whether the protagonists aim towards being accepted by or rebelling against their respective, conformist societies, their reactions reveal the conflictual dialectics between an individual’s subjective identity and his/her societal identity. This chapter focuses on the dynamics and delineations of this conflict in the two works. The various theoretical frameworks employed in this chapter -namely Lacan’s model of psychic development, Jean-Paul Sartre’s ideas on the feeling of shame consequent upon the look of the Other, existential anguish and bad faith and Erving Goffman’s sociological insights into the significance of the social interactions and stigmatizing inclinations of societies- help unveil the factors contributing to the formation of this conflict.

1.1 The Mirrored Tenant

The mirror stage occupies the central position in Lacan’s model of psychic development. This model is composed of three orders: the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real,

⁴ Unless otherwise stated, the English translations of the quotes are taken from Michael Bullock’s translation of *Stiller*.

⁵ In this regard, in *Plato’s Pharmacy*, Derrida defines writing in terms of the father-son relationship, which involves an act of patricide. He argues that the text, as the double of its author or its father, turns around, kills the author, reveals his own independent existence and acquires authority over its author. Thus, writing/text is that which “is opposed to its other,” but “at once supplements and supplants it” (95-96). In this sense, the notes of the narrator/Stiller- as will be discussed later- reveal the falsity of his claim. As he believes that “man gehe aus dem Geschriebenen hervor wie eine Schlange aus ihrer Haut” (330) (‘one emerges from what has been written as a snake emerges from its skin’ (284)), the dead skin that he casts is that of James White.

exposing the relationships between language, the subject and the outside world. In his 1949 seminar, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” Lacan outlines the dual relationship the subject establishes with his specular image in the Imaginary order, a duality that triggers a conflict persistent throughout the individual’s life. Thus, he maintains that

[i]t suffices to understand the mirror stage in this context as an identification, in the full sense analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image ... the total form of his body, by which the subject anticipates the maturation of his power in a mirage, is given to him only as a gestalt, that is, in an exteriority in which, to be sure, this form is more constitutive than constituted ... this gestalt ... symbolizes the *I*’s mental permanence, at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination. (Lacan76)

In Ragland Sullivan’s words, the mirror stage exposes “a dialectical instance in development, which *permanently* situated the human subject in a line of fiction and alienation’ (17).⁶ And this alienating identity is what, as argued by Lacan, marks the individual’s “entire mental development with its rigid structure” (78). By contrast, language, social laws and interactions characterize the Symbolic order. It is the realm in which the subject is confronted with the social rules embodied in and symbolized by the figure of the father.

It is in the *name of the father* that we must recognize the basis of the symbolic function, which since the dawn of historical time, has identified his person with the figure of the law. This conception allows us to clearly distinguish ... the unconscious effects of this function from the narcissistic relations, or even real relations, that the subject has with the image and actions of the person who embodies this function. (Lacan 230).

⁶ My own italics.

Therefore, it is in the Imaginary and Symbolic orders that one's ego is formed based on external images, upon an *other*. Considering that in Lacan's frame of thought "[t]he idea of a mirror stage no longer has anything to do with a real stage or phase in the Freudian sense, nor with a real mirror" for in fact "[t]he stage becomes a psychic or ontological operation through which a human being is made by means of identification with his fellow-being" (Roudinesco 29), *The Tenant* delineates the individual's dual relationship with his specular image, the alienation consequent upon the individual's identification with another individual and finally its permanent implication with the individual's conception of his identity both literally, i.e. through the presence of actual mirrors, and figuratively, i.e. through Trelkovsky's identification with another individual.

Mirrors play a significant role in Polanski's cinema. Apart from *Two Men and a Wardrobe* (1958), in which the mirror reflects the decay and corruption of the world, in other films, mirrors perform the same function as they do in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931); that is, as the surface indicating the disintegration of the self-image and the instability and unpredictability of the world (Coates, *Doubling, Distance and Identification* 63). Accordingly, in *Repulsion*, if the moment Carol (Catherine Deneuve) looks through her sister's wardrobe and touches her clothes marks the beginning of her transformation into her sister, hence the disintegration of her identity, this moment coincides with the start of the disintegration of her external world, the harbinger of which is the image of the construction worker in the mirror. In a similar manner, it is argued that Trelkovsky's psychosis and the consequent crumbling of his symbolic world begin when he sees the image of his double through the bathroom window (Wexman 72), the window here functioning as a reflective surface.

Furthermore, J. Robert Craig, in his analysis of the visual tropes in *The Tenant*, aptly points out the role of the mirror as that which exposes the conflictual, dual relationship of Trelkovsky to his self. He maintains that the mirror reflects "the tenant's gaze throughout the film ... It visually emphasizes Trelkovsky's inability to discern which of his dual selves he is" (133). These dual selves do indeed point to the dual selves consequent upon one's identification with one's specular image during the mirror stage. In this sense, Simone Choule functions as a form of Lacanian mirror image in relation to Trelkovsky;

she is Trelkovsky's imago, against which and with which Trelkovsky identifies himself. In addition, the conflict of the two images, and thus the ambivalence about and the alienation from his self, is delineated in the film not only through Trelkovsky's reflections in mirrors and his fascination by his own specular reflections, but also through oscillating representations of him in male and female clothing. The explicit portrayal of this conflict occurs when Trelkovsky, in a female wig, dress and make-up, looks at his feminized image in the mirror and describes this image as "beautiful, beautiful, adorable, goddess, divine." Trelkovsky's admiration of his feminized image also reveals the narcissistic, erotic pleasure that he -as a cross dresser- derives by looking at his reflection in the mirror. However, the "difference" that this image conveys, since "both genders become somehow inscribed on the performative reflective image" (Bruzzi 153), corresponds to the difference inherent in the gestalt of the specular image introjected by the subject.

Furthermore, this specific mirror image indeed marks the climax of Trelkovsky's alienation from his self since it not only reflects a feminine-looking Trelkovsky who attributes an exclusively feminine feature to himself, i.e. pregnancy, but it is also preceded by Simone Choule's apparition in the toilet facing Trelkovsky's bedroom unbandaging herself and is followed by an objective view of the toilet behind whose window there is and will be no one anymore; the reincarnation of the preceding image in Trelkovsky is indeed completed. It is worth noting that the view of the empty bathroom is among the few instances in the film for which the camera untethers itself from Trelkovsky's point of view and exposes an objective view of the scene.⁷

On the other hand, one cannot help but notice Trelkovsky's curious fascination with what represents femininity when he moves into the apartment, e.g. his interest in the former tenant's wardrobe, her clothes, etc. and his decision to keep one dress -the very dress in which he would defenestrate himself- in the wardrobe, as if just in case he might need it, all of which could arguably be indicative of the feminine tendencies and inclinations

⁷ It is also possible to consider the objective view of the empty bathroom -with no double figure in it- as indicative of Trelkovsky's hallucinatory state, thus his schizophrenia and delusions.

formed through the introjection of a feminine image. Linda Williams considers Trelkovsky's transformation into Simone Choule as the uncanny return of a repressed desire to become a woman (69). Indeed, one could trace back the root of this repressed desire, i.e. his inclination towards femininity, to the introjection of a feminine image. Regarding introjection, Sándor Ferenczi defines it as a process in which the neurotic -and a normal human being as he later argues- looks for "objects with whom he can identify, to whom he can transfer feelings, whom he can thus draw into his circle of interests"(39). The identification process that he proposes as constitutive of introjection corresponds to the individual's primal identifications with the images in the Imaginary and Symbolic orders: the image of a mother/feminine figure and that of a father/masculine figure, respectively. Considering that introjection is a continual psychic process, Trelkovsky's identification with a feminine image -or that which represents femininity- and introjecting its attributes have endowed him with feminine traits and tendencies. From another aspect, when Trelkovsky first meets Simone Choule, she lacks any obviously identifying features due to her bandages. Such lack renders her identity questionable. Trelkovsky's possible introjection of Simone's indeterminate identity arguably creates a cleavage within Trelkovsky's identity which would finally place his identity in an indeterminate state as well.

1.2 The Entrapped Tenant

A man, coming down the stairs, notices a window on the wall enticing him into becoming the unseen spectator of an erotic spectacle, a topless woman drying her hair. Knowing that there is no one around, he keeps looking at her, enjoying the spectacle voyeuristically. Suddenly, a neighboring door opens and a man comes out. Although the neighbour does not even look up to notice that the man has been looking at the woman, the voyeur is compelled to look away, pretend to be arranging his scarf and move away from the window, which could reveal his shameful act and thus subject him to the reproachful look of the man. As soon as the unwelcome neighbour retreats into his apartment, the man goes back to his vantage point and looks through the window, most probably hoping to see the woman once more. However, what he encounters this time is the grotesque smile of a man brushing his teeth and looking straight at him. Ashamed of

the look, or the smile representing the potential judgmental and defining power of the look, the man in *A Toothful Smile* (1957) drops his head low in shame and walks down the stairs, sharing his embarrassment with his shadow. Indeed, since the shadow represents “the long bag we drag behind us” (Bly 17), the shadow of the voyeur in the *Toothful Smile* -written by Polanski himself- represents and foreshadows the long bag of doubling, voyeurism and embarrassment that many characters of Polanski’s films will have to drag behind them. In this sense, *A Toothful Smile* could be considered as the prototype of the Polanskian embarrassment being reincarnated repeatedly in almost all his films.

The feeling of shame and embarrassment, *inter alia*, is among the obvious characterizing features of Trelkovsky right from the outset of the film since “his hesitant bodily movements and his excessive politeness” delineate that Trelkovsky is indeed “a lesser person” whose presence needs to be justified (Radovic 10). This feeling that he is a “lesser person” compels him not only to apologize to people for being a nuisance, but also to feel ashamed for merely existing, for being Trelkovsky. The feeling of shame, Sartre maintains, is due to being “ashamed of myself as I appear to the Other” (302). In other words, the by-product of being the object of the encroaching look of the Other, which defines one’s being and to which one has no access, is the feeling of shame. In addition, there is the feeling of shame that one would experience when one does something that goes against the codes of appropriate conduct. Therefore, “when we perform some vulgar or awkward act and are surprised to see someone viewing us, we are immediately ashamed” (Catalano 152). One finds the explicit indication of Trelkovsky’s sense of shame in the latter sense in the scene of his visit to the hospital. Looking at the bandaged Simone on the bed, who seems to be unaware of his presence, and holding a bag of oranges in his hands, he jumps to his feet when he hears a woman’s voice; suddenly aware that he had occupied the same place in relation to that woman as did Simone Choule in relation to him; that is, an object to be scrutinized, judged and defined. Embarrassed, he drops the oranges and, not unexpectedly, apologizes to Stella. Williams in her study of madness in *The Tenant* argues that Trelkovsky’s “illicit desire for her death appears to be the unacknowledged motive for his strange visit to her bedside bearing a bag of comically inappropriate oranges” (68). The repression of such desire

seems to lead him to fabricate a guilt-denying plot in which the other tenants become the culprits in her and subsequently his deaths. Williams' assertion that Trelkovsky had unconsciously wished Simone's death could be further supported by his feelings of suffocation and unease in the church where he might feel himself not only before the invisible presence of God through the priest's sermon, but also in the presence of his own conscience. One could also speculate that his feeling of shame might be due to the suspicion that could arise if one were to find out that he is not related to Simone Choule in any ways, hence his failure in justifying his presence in the hospital and the possible conclusion that he is there because of a personal benefit -i.e. appropriating the apartment when the rightful tenant is not dead yet. This could be the reason why he tells Stella that he was Simone's friend or later tells the same lie to the hospital receptionist over the phone to inquire about Simone's state of health.

After the hospital, which Trelkovsky and Stella are asked to leave because of the disturbance they caused to Simone Choule's peace, they go to a café and later to a movie theater where Trelkovsky experiences yet another pang of shame. Engaged in erotic acts with Stella in the movie theater while looking at the violent scenes from a martial arts film, he realizes a man is persistently looking at him from the row behind. Feeling embarrassed, he stops kissing Stella. Indeed, this Sartrean dialectics of either being able to "look at" another individual, thus objectifying him/her, or "being looked at" by another individual, hence being objectified, plays out throughout the film, reaching its culmination in the look that Trelkovsky would share with his identical double looking at him from his apartment window and ending in his total imprisonment in the infringing gaze of the same double at the end of the film.

Furthermore, drawing upon Sartre's concept of existential freedom and applying it in his analysis of films, Pamerleau asserts that the

element of freedom often depicted in movies concerns the inner strength of persons, particularly in cases where the characters must stay true to themselves in the face of enormous pressures to conform. The goal of living authentically despite the pressures of society to the contrary is one of the few moral goals to

which existentialists are willing to commit, and it is a relatively common component of a film plot. Movies are able to depict both the strength and attractiveness of persons who have attained such freedom, as well as the difficulty in opposing a social world bent on maintaining the status quo. (46-47)

In this sense, *The Tenant* depicts the extreme case of the difficulty of staying true to oneself in the face of social pressures so much so that their force triggers and leads to the individual's psychotic breakdown.

Finally, in his analysis of the role of the other in constituting the identity of an individual, R.D. Laing, whose work is indebted to Sartre, discerns the formation of a conflict should one's definition of one's self differ from that or those conceived by others. Thus, he states:

A person will have considerable difficulty in establishing a consistent definition of himself in his own eyes if the definitions of himself given by others are inconsistent or even simultaneously and mutually exclusive ... The effort to 'fit in with' them or to repudiate them may involve the most intense conflicts." (75)

One could discern such a conflict in *The Tenant* whereby two distinct societal images imposed on Trelkovsky reinforce and reflect the gender fusion mirrored in his transvestite, specular image. On the one hand, the tenants of the apartment building condition his being accepted and his presence being tolerated on his repeating of the behavioral traits of the former tenant. In this sense, he needs to become the quiet Simone Choule who used to wear slippers after 10 pm, was used to smoking Marlboro and drinking hot chocolate in the mornings etc. On the other hand, his friends and workmates expect him to be an assertive man who would not bow down to his neighbours' expectations and complaints. In an attempt to fit himself into these two images, in other words, to embody both the submissiveness associated with femininity and the firm boldness characterizing masculinity, Trelkovsky resigns himself to transvestism. In addition, his possible delusions and psychosis could be seen as resulting not from his predisposition to psychosis, but from his attempts to satisfy the urges of and end the conflict between the two images since "in order to 'fit in with' two dissonant definitions of

himself, he may develop ‘incongruities’ in simultaneous expressions: attempting thereby to be each of his different incompatible identities at the one time ... or he may develop a ‘delusion’” (Laing 76). From another perspective, Trelkovsky’s transvestism and his reenactment of Simone’s act of suicide could be due to his total identification with the role that he was playing. As previously discussed in the introduction, Trelkovsky decides to defeat his neighbors at their own game by pretending to have adopted the identity of the former tenant. In other words, he decides to stage a performance before them. Nevertheless, he ends up becoming the kind of performer who, as Goffman identifies, is “fully taken in by his own act,” so much so that “he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality” (*Presentation of Self* 10). In this sense, he has no alternative but to set for himself an end like that of the character he is playing. Finally, Trelkovsky’s scream at the end could indicate the symbolic shattering of the very social rules he was expected to abide by. Mamula, in her discussion on the uncanny in films, links the uncanny to a linguistic disturbance and emphasizes “the inalienable role of language and its loss in the realm of the uncanny” (178). Considering that the Symbolic is structured like a language and characterized by social laws, and that the figure of the double belongs to the realm of the uncanny, Trelkovsky’s grotesque scream in the concluding scene of the film, in which he is in close proximity to his double, signifies the collapse of language to the pre-linguistic associated with the realm of the uncanny and his final protest against the impositions of the Symbolic realm. One could also consider the scream as the expression of the horror Trelkovsky must be feeling when he realizes that he has indeed turned into a woman since he gets this affirmation from his double that embodies all the masculinity that he lacks. Being called Simone -a woman- and reenacting her state of being -bandaged with a front tooth missing in the hospital- reveals the primacy accorded to the feminine image of the pre-linguistic (Imaginary) which, in turn, entails the repression of the masculine image of the linguistic (Symbolic). The result for Trelkovsky, who until the very last moment before his jump insists -at least linguistically- that he is not Simone Choule but Trelkovsky, is the loss of his linguistic ability. Unable to utter any words, he has no alternative but to emit a scream expressing his refusal of the acceptance of such transformation.

1.3 The Stigmatized Tenant

From a societal perspective, *The Tenant* arguably depicts the dynamics of the social stigmatization of an individual. In his discussion of stigma and society's acceptance/non-acceptance of the stigmatized individual, Goffman draws a distinction between one's "virtual social identity" and his/her "actual social identity," the former referring to the set of attributes imposed on the individual by the society based on visible or invisible stigmatic signs and the latter to the actual "attributes he could in fact be proved to possess" (*Stigma* 2). Should one's "virtual social identity," and not his "actual social identity" be taken as the basis upon which one's personal identification is formed, for instance in the event that one is a stranger among a group of people, the likelihood of one being misjudged, mistreated and stigmatized is higher since

[w]hile the stranger is present before us, evidence can arise of his possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind -in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, dangerous, or weak. He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. (3)

This inevitable tension between these two sets of perceptions requires the individual to incessantly make an effort to emancipate his image from the society's possible, wrong impositions and perceptions. Such dialectical tension and the efforts to correct others' perceptions of one are evident in *The Tenant*. On the one hand, from the very moment Trelkovsky steps into the apartment building and establishes, visual before even verbal, contact with the concierge (Shelley Winters), Monsieur Zy and his wife (Florence Blot), he is discredited by being perceived as a possible charity collector and an inconsiderate bachelor. In fact, such seemingly groundless reactions, refusing to give Trelkovsky the benefit of the doubt, could suggest the existence of a form of hostility in the microcosmic world of Monsieur Zy's apartment, which instantly wards off strangers. In addition, his nationality is constantly used as a stigmatizing force. While he is Polish and holds the citizenship of France, by the end of the film and through his assimilation into Simone Choule, he loses the former and is perceived as the latter. He is judged and denied his

lawful rights for not being a French native; e.g., Monsieur Zy advises him not to report the break-in incident to the police with the justification, or rather the pretext, that his foreign status might create more problems for him. Such stigmatization based on his nationality indeed accentuates Trelkovsky's foreign status. On the other hand, like all stigmatized individuals, Trelkovsky's fundamental issue in life is "acceptance" (Goffman, *Stigma* 8). Therefore, in order to be accepted into the hostile and unwelcoming world of other tenants, he takes up Simone Choule's attitudes. Therefore, the discrepancy between his real identity and the one imposed on and expected of him obligates him to consciously try to fit himself into the category accepted by the landlord and other tenants. However, his attempt at acceptance, a failed one retrospectively, comes at the cost of ruining his social life, losing his friends and colleagues and becoming a stranger to them (e.g., they exclude him from their conversation in the restaurant). Trelkovsky's failure in maintaining the identity norms expected of him by both his acquaintances and his neighbours leads him to "alienate himself from the community which upholds the norm" (129). Thus, he belongs neither to the known world of his friends nor to the unknown one of his neighbours. He breaks off his relationship with the former and commits suicide before the latter. In addition, according to Goffman, one of the consequences of the "mixed contacts" between the stigmatized and the normal is the former's inevitable isolation (12), the result of which would be the lack of "salutary feed-back of daily social intercourse with others" (13). Deprived of this kind of feedback, the stigmatized individual might become "suspicious, depressed, hostile, anxious, and bewildered" (13). Such isolation from social communities and its pertinent consequences might serve as the triggering forces behind what prompts Trelkovsky's hallucinations and delusions, hence his possible schizophrenia. In other words, when Trelkovsky is forced to stay away from all his friends and colleagues in order to abide by the rules, he is deprived of this necessary social feedback, leading him to believe that his neighbours are plotting his murder.

On another level, the result of his social isolation would arguably be his isolation and alienation from his unaccepted self as Trelkovsky, explicitly delineated when the address on his identity card given to the superintendent of the police in the police station is still that of his previous apartment. While this could indicate that the real being named

Trelkovsky is left behind in another place and that the one residing in Monsieur Zy's apartment, according to the social documentation, cannot be Trelkovsky, on another level, it could point to the existence of Trelkovsky's explicit double who embodies Trelkovsky's corroded masculinity simultaneously with the latter's feminization. Feminine in appearance, what remains of Trelkovsky's masculine identity at the end is his name with which he tries to assert his individuality.⁸ Nevertheless, this is not enough evidence for establishing his identity since a name is not a "very reliable way of fixing identity" (Goffman, *Stigma* 59) and "is in certain ways easiest to tamper with" (58), especially given the foreignness of his name in a xenophobic society, where the probability of its being mispronounced and set apart from the norm is indeed significant.⁹ In addition, it has been argued that it is common for cross-dressers to change names (Bruzzi 167). However, since in Slavic linguistic space the sky/ski ending is commonly masculine, his name seems to be the only indication of his masculine identity.¹⁰

1.4 The Curious Case of Stiller/James White

In *Stiller*, similarly, one could discern Stiller's inclinations and attributes as described by his acquaintances and narrated by the narrator/Stiller as feminine. In his marriage to Julika, he seems to possess the attributes and play the role of what is socially considered as the feminine partner. For instance, the means of financial support of their life is through the income of Julika as a ballet performer rather than the little income Stiller makes as a sculptor for "Stiller ... verdiente damals mit seiner Bildhauerei überhaupt nichts, fast nichts, jedenfalls nicht genug, damit seine arme Gattin hätte aussetzen können" (90) ('Stiller ... at that time earned nothing at all with his sculpture, almost nothing, anyway not enough to enable his poor wife to stop working' (76)). His failure in

⁸ It is worth mentioning that the point about Trelkovsky's change of address and his failure to update his address is an addition to the novel's police scene since in the novel, there is no mention of Trelkovsky's address being that of his previous apartment.

⁹ This is analogous to the customary omission of the Polish *ń* from Polański's own name, even in academic books about him, which results in its continual, albeit subtle mispronunciation.

¹⁰ Nevertheless, if one were to consider the ending of a "Polish, Polish" name, it would have to be "ski." Hence, the "y" ending might indeed suggest a Russian name, as it is conveyed in the novel.

living up to the expected role of the masculine partner is once more repeated in his affair with Sybille in which she is the one who has to provide the financial means for their trip or her own expenses by asking her husband Rolf, who, in Stiller's eyes, embodies all the masculine features he himself lacks. Accordingly, comparing Stiller to her husband, Sybille perceives Stiller as in need of protection and incapable of embodying masculine firmness and fierceness as "[u]m Stiller konnte man Angst haben, um Rolf nicht. Beide zusammen in einer Person, das wäre es gewesen! Manchmal kam ihr Rolf wie ein großer Hund vor, ein Bernhardiner, den man besser nicht an die Leine nahm, um nicht umgeworfen zu werden. Stiller kam ihr wie ein Bruder vor, fast wie eine Schwester" (284) ('[o]ne could be frightened for Stiller- not for Rolf. Both of them rolled into one, that would have been the ideal! Rolf often seemed to her like a big dog, a St Bernard, which it was better not to put on the leash for fear of being dragged around. Stiller seemed to her like a brother, almost like a sister' (243)). Furthermore, the narrator/Stiller, through the accounts he hears from other people, finally believes that Stiller embodies more femininity than masculinity as he concludes, "Ich sehe jetzt ihren verschollenen Stiller schon ziemlich genau: er ist wohl sehr feminin" (251) ('I can now see their missing Stiller pretty clearly. He seems to be very feminine' (215)). His weak masculine features, his constant feeling of impotence and inadequacy and his need to prove himself -considered psychoanalytically- could arguably be the results of the introjection of his mother's feminine features and the lack of a strong masculine image to identify with. As Reschke -through a comparison of Stiller with his brother, Wilfried- has observed Stiller was

[r]aised without the influence of a father by a loving, understanding mother- according to Stiller/White's notebook entries that contrast sharply with his younger stepbrother Wilfried's recollections of their mother -Stiller turns out quite different from the practical Wilfried, who is a bit rough and dull, the manager of the fruit section at a farm cooperative. Stiller becomes a sculptor and a malleable, charming man but one unable to take a firm position on anything. (62)

His lack of masculine severity is further reinforced through the constant presence of a woman -mostly and primarily his mother- in his life as he confesses

Ich kann nicht allein sein, genau genommen, und ich habe es noch kaum eine Stunde in meinem Leben gekonnt! Und meistens war da, genau genommen, ein Weib. Angefangen bei meiner lieben und guten Mutter ... und später trat ich meine heimatliche Strafe an, eine eidgenössische Wolldecke unter dem Arm, und saß fast einen Sommer lang in der Kaserne, aber allein war ich nicht, denn es tat mir leid, für meine Mutter, der so etwas furchtbar war. (334-335)

I cannot be alone, strictly speaking, and there has hardly been an hour in my life when I was able to be alone. Most of the time, strictly speaking, there was a woman present. It began with my dear, good mother... Later I entered on my period of patriotic punishment with the federal blanket under my arm and spent nearly a whole summer in barracks, but I wasn't alone, because all the time I felt sorry for my mother, who was terribly upset by the whole thing. (287)

In other words, the fact that he never feels alone and that his loneliness is shared with a woman suggests the profound effect of femininity in his life. In fact, one could consider the feminine figure -be it his mother, his first love Anya or his wife- as the other with whom Stiller was able to identify, or with whom, as the narrator/Stiller -in one of his notes in which he reveals his renounced identity as Stiller- writes, he could “delude” himself (289)¹¹. Said otherwise, since “[m]ost ‘identities’ require an other in and through a relationship with whom self’s identity is actualized [and thus] the other, for his part, by his/her actions may impose on self an unwanted identity” (Laing 70), the constant presence of his mother and other feminine figures could have indeed imposed on Stiller the feminine attributes he is identified with. In addition, this dependency upon an other in order to possess an identity and the imposition of an identity by that very other is discernable in Stiller’s pathological relationship to Julika, about which the narrator/Stiller writes:

¹¹ Täuschen (336).

Als Fremder hat man den Eindruck, daß diese zwei Menschen, Julika und der verschollene Stiller, auf eine unselige Weise zueinander paßten. Sie brauchten einander von ihrer Angst her. Ob zu Recht oder Unrecht, jedenfalls hatte die schöne Julika eine heimliche Angst, keine Frau zu sein. Und auch Stiller, scheint es, stand damals unter einer steten Angst, in irgendeinem Sinn nicht zu genügen; es fällt auf. (89)

[L]ooking at these two people from the outside, one has the impression that Julika and the vanished Stiller were suited to one another in an unfortunate manner. They needed each other because of their fear. Whether rightly or wrongly, the beautiful Julika harboured a secret fear that she was not a woman. And Stiller soon, it seems, was at that time perpetually afraid of being somehow inadequate. (75)

Thus, his malfunctioning relationship with Julika provides him with the opportunity to overcome his feeling of inadequacy by forming the image of a protective husband for himself and taking it upon himself to take care of the sick Julika so that he could feel “so kraftvoller” (146) (‘big and strong’ (124)). Nevertheless, he ends up proving himself incapable of doing so since he cannot live up to the expectations the society has of him as a husband. On many occasions, he is warned against mistreating his wife by his acquaintances and friends. For instance, one of their acquaintances goes to his studio and, with no intention of blaming him, tells him “Ich glaube, Stiller, Sie tun Ihrer Frau sehr unrecht” (112) (‘I think you’re doing your wife a great wrong’ (95)). To this remark, Stiller replies, “Was haben Sie anderes erwartet? ... Haben Sie gesehen, daß ich jemals etwas anderes getan habe als Unrecht?” (112) (‘what else did you expect? ... Have you ever known me do anything but wrong?’ (95)). Hence, his reactions to these good-intentioned people are either breaking up his relationships with them or building up more resentment against Julika.

In addition, it has been argued that Stiller appears “as a victim of the overbearing state mentality. There seems to be no way for him to be integrated into Swiss society” (Koepeke 48). In fact, his inability to integrate into the conformist, conservative society of

Switzerland lends the logic of flight to all major decisions/indecisions of Stiller, a flight from the rigidity of the Swiss society demarcating the scope of his artistic career, from his failures, from the consequences he had to take responsibility for, and finally as the narrator/Stiller concludes “eine Flucht vor sich selbst” (139), (‘a flight from himself’ (118)). These flights indeed convey Stiller’s refusal to play the social games of the conformist society of Switzerland, which gives the individual total freedom yet at the cost of total conformity. Moreover, Stiller’s escape to America, his renouncing of his identity as Stiller and his adoption of a new identity could be described as his attempts to flee from the “Prinzip der bestimmten Identität,” (‘principle of the fixed identity’) (qtd. in Remington 22).

On yet another level, these flights could be seen as his flights from his constant feeling of anguish towards the social and existential obligation to take responsibility for his decisions and actions before and during the Spanish Civil War. Before enlisting as a soldier, Stiller reads an article about his artworks in a newspaper and is confronted with the expectations that the society has of him.

Eines Tages erwachst du und liest es in der Zeitung, was die Welt von dir erwartet. Die Welt!. Genau besehen ist es natürlich nur ein freundlicher Snob, der das geschrieben hat. Aber plötzlich bist du eine Hoffnung! Und schon kommen die Arrivierten, um dir die Hand zu schütteln, weißt du, liebenswürdig, aus lauter Furcht wie vor einem jungen David. Es ist lächerlich. Aber da stehst du nun mit deinem Größenwahn - bis endlich, Gott sei Dank, so ein Spanischer Bürgerkrieg losgeht! (264)

One day you wake up and read in the newspaper what the world expects of you. The world! In actual fact, of course, it was only written by a well-meaning snob. But suddenly you’re a white hope. And along come those who have already arrived, wanting to shake your hand and make themselves pleasant, simply out of fear, as though they were Goliaths scared of young David. It’s ridiculous. But there you stand with your delusions of grandeur- until, thank God, a Spanish civil War breaks out. (226)

Thus, although one would have to agree with Koepke's argument that Max Frisch portrays creative individuals who become alienated from and in their societies since their needs are divergent from the norms of a society that is immutable in its alienating features (151), one would also have to take into account Stiller's inner powerlessness to take responsibility for his actions, decisions and even his artistic talent. Since he feels incompetent as an artist, which indicates an inferiority complex reinforced by his subsequent failures (Pender 125), an inadequacy even confessed by the narrator/Stiller when he is forced to confront the artistic works of Stiller in his studio,¹² he goes to fight in the war. Nevertheless, as Reschke has observed "the Spanish Civil War provides him a temporary escape from his artistic responsibilities ... but his experience in Spain shakes his self-confidence further, handicapping him more severely than any artistic defeat would have done" (63).

Stiller, who had been in charge of guarding a small ferry, failed to shoot Fascist soldiers when they came into his view on the opposite bank: "ließ Stiller sie die Fähre benutzen, ohne zu schießen, wiewohl es für ihn, der in tadelloser Deckung lag, eine Leichtigkeit gewesen wäre, die vier Feinde auf der Fähre abzuschießen" (139-140) ('Stiller allowed them to use the ferry without firing although it would have been easy for him, from his perfect cover, to have shot the four enemies dead on the ferry' (118)). He justified, or rather as he later confesses to Sybille 'lied' about (229), his failure to his commanders as the malfunctioning of his Russian rifle. When he retells this story, though reluctantly, to his friends on the first night he meets his future wife, Julika, it was as if "[s]eine Miene war, indem er erzählte, plötzlich ganz leblos. Es war keine unmittelbare Erinnerung mehr, was der junge Bildhauer von sich gab, sondern eine Anekdote" (141) ('all the life drained out of his face. The story the young sculptor was telling sounded somehow second-hand, not a recollection of his own experience, but a mere anecdote' (119)). Indeed, this retelling quite logically must sound inauthentic and second-hand as his own experience of

¹² Thus he writes: "Ein einziger Umblick in diesem verstaubten Atelier: Wieviel Arbeit, ach, wieviel Verbissenheit, wieviel Fleiß und Schweiß, und doch ist es nicht so, daß man auch nur davor die Mütze abzuziehen ein Bedürfnis hat: (361) ('A single glance round this dusty studio and one couldn't help thinking: How much labor, oh, how much dogged perseverance, how much sweat and grind, and yet one doesn't even feel an urge to raise one's hat to the result' (311)).

the event would reveal not “einen Sieg des Menschlichen, einen Sieg des konkreten Erlebnisses über alles Ideologische” (141) (‘a victory for humanity, a victory of concrete experience over ideological rigidity’ (120)), as his friend would declare it to be, or the fear of shooting another human being as he would claim, but arguably the victory of anguish over duty.¹³ Based on the Sartrean distinction between fear and anguish, Pamerleau gives the examples of soldiers who “fear a bullet but are anguished by the possibility that they may run or desert as a result of that fear” (27). Accordingly, it could be due to the same possibility that Stiller failed to perform his duty as a soldier. This abandonment not only prefigures his subsequent flights and abandonments, even when in the guise of an American man, but it also causes his persistent feelings of impotence and incompleteness as a man. Quite aware of such cause and effect relationships between his experience as a soldier and his impotence as a man, he admits to Sybille “[w]eil ich ein Versager bin. Ganz einfach! Ich bin kein Mann ... Es war ein Verrat ... daran gibt es nichts zu deuten! Ich hatte einen Auftrag, ich hatte mich sogar darum beworben ... ich hatte den Befehl, die Fähre zu bewachen, einen vollkommen klaren Befehl ... Ich hatte zu schießen. Wozu war ich in Spanien?” (268) (‘I’m a failure. Quite simply, I’m not a man... It was treachery... There’s nothing to explain. I had a job to do, I’d even volunteered for it, I had orders to guard the ferry, perfectly clear orders ... I had to fire. What was I in Spain for?’ (229)). In other words, the “existential Angst,” emerging explicitly in his experience of the Spanish Civil War, the core theme of *Stiller* and problem of Stiller (Sandberg 128), compels him to constantly be in flight so as not to admit that and yet another failure. In this sense, his flight from meeting his society’s expectations of him as an artist by trying to be a soldier fails as he finds “himself in an

¹³ Reschke argues that Stiller’s insincerity in retelling his experience of the Spanish Civil war is revealed in “[t]he contrast between Stiller’s lifeless face and his constantly moving fingers as he tells it [which] hints at discrepancies between the story he tells and what really happened that morning in Spain; he may be omitting facts, or perhaps changing them to suit his purpose” (54). Indeed, his hands are moving because he is sculpting a story. In addition, the relationship between his hands and his war experience acquires significance on yet another level in that the hands with which he gives existence to his artistic inspirations as a sculptor could not possibly be used to take others’ existence away, even if his duty as a soldier requires him to do so. In this sense, one could argue that his constantly moving fingers reenact his past experience at a rather unconscious level and reveal the anxiety he was feeling when in the dilemma of shooting or not shooting.

even greater dilemma, this time facing not merely public expectation of him as an artist, but a *fait accompli*, a false public image of himself as a man, which he helped to create by his silence” (Reschke 73). From another aspect, however, Stiller’s failure in shooting the enemy could be seen as his rejection of the societal rules defining and limiting the definition of a soldier since, according to Sartre, the society does have a limiting function in relation to individuals

A grocer who dreams is offensive to the buyer, because such a grocer is not wholly a grocer. Society demands that he limit himself to his function as a grocer, just as the soldier at attention makes himself into a soldier-thing with a direct regard which does not see at all, which is no longer meant to see, since it is the rule and not the interest of the moment which determines the point he must fix his eyes on ... There are indeed many precautions to imprison a man in what he is, as if we lived in perpetual fear that he might escape from it, that he might break away and suddenly elude his condition. (102)

And it is in an attempt to escape from such imprisonment that Stiller leaves for America with its untamed nature and endless opportunities and returns with the identity of a man who succeeds in all his endeavors, be it saving a mulatto girl from a burning house and eloping with her or committing and getting away with three murders. In this sense, he not only flees from his self as an unsuccessful artist and a failed soldier, but he also distances himself from Switzerland whose adequacy in everything reminds him of his own inadequacy and impotence. On one level, this alternate identity, i.e. the potent, masculine James White, emphasizes the narrator/Stiller’s attempt to actualize what the existentialists call an “authentic attitude,” whereby one acknowledges that the choice to be someone else and to define oneself as one wishes is always open and inexhaustible (Pamerleau 29). On yet another level, this identity, along with all his attempts not to be the creative artist or the dutiful soldier the society has wanted him to be and take responsibility for, characterizes him as an individual in what Sartre terms “bad faith.” Sartre maintains that bad faith is

indeed a lie to oneself. To be sure, the one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth. Bad faith then has in appearance the structure of falsehood. Only what changes everything is the fact that in bad faith it is from myself that I am hiding the truth. (89)

The “displeasing truth” that the narrator/Stiller tries to conceal from others -and himself to the point of belief- is his being Stiller with a past that is replete with failures and resentment. The fact that he is aware of the truth, i.e. he is indeed Stiller and not James White, is evident through the many postscripts and afterthoughts he adds to his notes on Stiller, which reveal his deep understanding of Stiller’s psychological states. For instance, about Stiller’s relationship to women he gives the following analysis/diagnosis, which would be possible, only if he knew Stiller’s subjective mental states and processes. Thus, he writes:

Unter Männern kommt er sich nicht als Mann vor. Aber in seiner Grundangst, nicht zu genügen, hat er eigentlich auch Angst vor den Frauen. Er erobert mehr, als er zu halten vermag, und wenn die Partnerin einmal seine Grenze erspürt hat, verliert er jeden Mut; er ist nicht bereit, nicht imstande, geliebt zu werden als der Mensch, der er ist, und daher vernachlässigt er unwillkürlich jede Frau, die ihn wahrhaft liebt, denn nähme er ihre Liebe wirklich ernst, so wäre er ja genötigt, infolgedessen sich selbst anzunehmen - davon ist er weit entfernt! (252)

Among men he feels he is not a man. But in his fundamental fear of being inadequate he is really afraid of women too. He conquers more than he can hold, and once his partner has sensed his limits he completely loses his nerve. He is not willing to and not capable of being loved as the person he is, and therefore he involuntarily neglects every woman who truly loves him, for if he took her love really seriously, he would be compelled as a result to accept himself -and that is the last thing he wants (216).

Moreover, in one of his postscripts he maintains that

Ich bin nicht ihr Stiller. Was wollen sie von mir! Ich bin ein unglücklicher, nichtiger, unwesentlicher Mensch, der kein Leben hinter sich hat, überhaupt keines. Wozu mein Geflunker? Nur damit sie mir meine Leere lassen, meine Nichtigkeit, meine Wirklichkeit, denn es gibt keine Flucht, und was sie mir anbieten, ist Flucht, nicht Freiheit, Flucht in eine Rolle. (49)

I am not their Stiller. What do they want with me? I'm an unfortunate, insignificant, unimportant person with no life behind him, none at all. Why am I lying to them? Just so that they should leave me my emptiness, my insignificance, my reality; it's no good running away, and what they are offering me is flight, not freedom, acting a part means flight. (39-40)

This explicit confession which reveals that he is not who he has so far claimed to be, i.e. James White, exposes within it the lie that he has been telling to himself since the identity of James White is rendered a mere part/act he has been playing, the consciousness of which characterizes him as an individual guilty of bad faith. The most marked proof in support of the argument that the narrator/Stiller has been consciously playing the part of James White, thus lying to himself about his identity in order to detach himself from his past and his pertinent accountability for it, is given in the last paragraph of the seventh notebook, in which he gives his subjective view of his attempted suicide in America before concluding his notes with an objective account of the court's verdict.

Eigentlich kann ich bloß sagen: Ich habe damals eine Ahnung erlebt. Nicht die Scham verbietet mir, sie auf den Tisch zu legen, sondern ich kann es einfach nicht. Vor mir selbst habe ich mich jener Handlung nie geschämt. Ich hatte ein Leben, das nie eines gewesen war, von mir geworfen. Mag die Art, wie ich gemacht hatte, lächerlich sein! Es blieb mir die Erinnerung an eine ungeheure Freiheit: Alles hing von mir ab. Ich durfte mich entscheiden, ob ich noch einmal leben wollte, jetzt aber so, daß ein wirklicher Tod zustande kommt. Alles hing nur von mir ab, ich sagte es schon ... Und daß ich mich ... zum Leben entschieden hatte, merkte ich daran, daß ein rasender Schmerz einsetzte. Ich hatte die bestimmte Empfindung, jetzt erst geboren worden zu sein, und fühlte mich mit

einer Unbedingtheit, die auch das Lächerliche nicht zu fürchten hat, bereit, niemand anders zu sein als der Mensch, als der ich eben geboren worden bin, und kein anderes Leben zu suchen als dieses, das ich nicht von mir werfen kann. (381)

All I can really say is that I had a premonition. It is not shame that prevents me from laying my cards on the table, but sheer inability. I never felt ashamed of my action. I threw away a life that had never been a life. Even if the way I did so was ridiculous. I was left with the memory of an immense freedom: Everything depended on me. I could decide whether I wanted to live again, but this time so that a real death took place. Everything depended upon me alone, as I have already said ... And I realized that ... I had decided in favor of life, by the fact that I began to feel a terrible pain. I had the distinct sensation that I was now being born for the first time, and with the certainty that need not fear even ridicule. I felt ready to be nobody but the person as whom I had just been born and to seek no other life than this, which I could not cast from me (328)

This confession indeed discloses the fact that the narrator/Stiller had made a conscious decision to deny his previous life and separate himself from who he once was. It also exposes the failure which is the natural outcome of a conscious attempt to lie to oneself as finally “the lie falls back and collapses beneath [one’s] look; it is ruined from behind by the very consciousness of lying to [oneself] which pitilessly constitutes itself well within [one’s] project as its very condition” (Sartre 89). In other words, *Stiller* could be read as the narrative of the attempts of a man who denies his facticities, gives primacy to and identifies with his transcendencies in bad faith yet is finally forced to face those denied facticities. And the court’s verdict is the representative and the reminder of those facticities.¹⁴ The tales of his adventures in America and Mexico also disclose his state of bad faith as they convey his attempts to “make [his] transcendencies into facticities and

¹⁴ Facticity, in Sartre’s existential philosophy refers to features and realities that belong to us factually such as our physical features, our genealogical background and our past acts. However, human beings can reflect on and interpret these facticities, thus transcend them. Bad faith, in this sense, is taking one’s facticity for transcendence and vice versa (Catalano 82-83).

[his] facticities into transcendencies (sic)” (Catalano 83) since their hyperbolic and romanticized features expose the fact that they bear little truth to factual reality.

Nevertheless, the narrator/Stiller’s attempts to present himself as he believes he is, in fact, does convey his authentic attitude towards his existence for he acknowledges that while he bears the societal identity of Stiller, he could define himself otherwise subjectively. Yet, since the existential game is “to play at being something or other” while knowing that “this game cannot be won” (Pamerleau 29), he fails in maintaining this authentic attitude for he believes that he can win this game. This, indeed, points to Adorno’s critique of Sartre’s conception of freedom in that Sartre does not take into account “the fact that the very possibility of choosing depends on what can be chosen ... Within a predetermined reality, freedom becomes an empty claim” (180). Arguably, society and societal preconceptions and expectations are what limit the individual’s choice in determining his self and his reality freely. In this sense, Frisch demonstrates that one’s attempt to (re)construct an identity without taking into account the social roles assigned to one and others’ perceptions of one’s identity is doomed to fail. In other words, he conveys the idea that achieving an authentic identity through free will i.e. without being under the pressure and influence of social preconceptions and expectations, is but an illusion. Nevertheless, for as long as one has not come to such a conclusion, one needs to resist social pressures of conformity and role-assignment. The attempt to resist could arguably be manifest through mechanisms of projection and doubling, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 2

2 The Defense: Doubling and Projection

In chapter one, the dynamics and the delineation of the conflict arising from the incongruities between one's conception of self and the self others expect/impose on one were discussed. Trapped between the two divergent, opposing identities, the protagonists attempt to reconcile the two images and eliminate the existing conflict. This chapter presents a discussion of the various forms in which these very attempts aim to both satisfy the urges of the two images and to provide the protagonists with ways to escape. Arguably, they include mechanisms of doubling and projection. It will be discussed how the indeterminate in-between-ness, occurring as the result of the conflict, leads the protagonists both to adopt a different identity and to project onto others the attributes within themselves that are either socially unacceptable or personally desired and yet unfulfilled. In *Stiller*, we see the mechanism of doubling explicitly at work in the relationship between the Swiss Stiller, the American James White and the American/Swiss narrator/Stiller. For instance, while Stiller is presented as feminine, impotent, and a social and personal failure, his double, James White, is masculine, potent and successful in all his endeavours. Furthermore, whereas the identity of James White enables the narrator/Stiller to distance himself from the identity of Stiller and his past, and to project the attributes he was once blamed for onto the Stiller of his notes, his identity as Stiller, of which -as discussed in chapter one- he is conscious, leads him to project those very attributes onto the fictional characters of his tales so as to safeguard the James White of his personality against any attachment to and embodiment of Stiller's features.

It has been argued that in his films, Polanski depicts human identity as enigmatic, "giving rise to a vision of character as mask" (Wexman 113). Such masking renders the character double for as one would know that behind the mask there exists a face, so would one suspect that behind the apparent identity of Polanski's characters, there must hide a different one. For instance, one would discern such masked identity behind the social

mask of hyper-conformity adopted by Trelkovsky before his suicide. Accordingly, the motif of doubling is explicitly exposed and explored in *The Tenant* on various levels. Firstly, there exists an explicit doubling between the protagonist, Trelkovsky, and the former tenant, Simone Choule, depicted and prefigured in the credit sequence of the film where Trelkovsky's transformation into Simone Choule is momentarily shown behind the window of his apartment by the untethered camera. Secondly, there exists the autoscopic encounter of Trelkovsky with his male double, which- as will be discussed later- signifies and presages the disintegration of his identity and his final death. Thirdly, Trelkovsky's splitting of the self- epitomized in his transvestite state- is also indicative of an internal doubling. Finally, one could discern a doubling between Polanski the actor and Polanski the director. Moreover, the onset of the schizophrenia that Trelkovsky arguably suffers from could be related to the mechanism of projection through which he translates his socially unacceptable desires -that of cross-dressing in particular- into his neighbors' intentions to transform him into the former tenant.¹⁵

Having discussed the various manifestations of doubling in the two works under study, the final section of this chapter focuses on the mutual relationship between doubling and solitude. On the one hand, it will be argued how one's confrontation with one's double reinforces one's sense of solitude and imposes fear, mortality and disgust on the self (Engelberg 42). On the other hand, solitude will be taken as that which yields doubling in the first place since it presents the self with a way of escape from solitude through splitting the self; a vicious circle indeed. Paul Coates terms this, "the double's ironic critique of individuality" in which

isolation employs the imagination to generate company out of itself even as it remains real solitude. The solution that resolves the problems of the individualistic yearning for companionship is a parody of the desired synthesis of

¹⁵ Although there exist several scenes shot from the vantage point of Trelkovsky, e.g. seeing his neighbors' faces as demonic monsters after his first jump, which suggest a certain diagnosis of schizophrenia, I agree with Caputo's argument that there are many ambiguities that make this diagnosis a possibility, rather than a certainty. For instance, he mentions that Trelkovsky's distorted perceptions occur when he has a high fever, "leading us to conclude that he may just be suffering from temporary flu-induced hallucinations rather than a chronic mental illness" (156).

crowd and hermit: one creates society as God created Eve out of Adam -by splitting the self. (*The Realist Fantasy* 115)

2.1 The Double: a Proteus-like Figure

The double is among the oldest concepts whose use in its literary guise dates back to antiquity, e.g. Plato's *Symposium* in which Aristophanes proposes the idea of a primordial, androgynous human whose duality consisted in embodying the two genders or Plautus' *Amphitryon* in which Jupiter disguises himself as a man to seduce the latter's wife. Later on, the German Romantic writer, Jean-Paul Richter, in a footnote in his novel *Siebenkäs* (1796) applied the term *Doppelgänger* to this phenomenon and defined it as "So heissen Leute, die sich selbst sehen" ('So people who see themselves are called'). In its cultural guise, on the other hand, one finds the origin of the double in primitive beliefs related to mirror/water reflections and shadows (Rank, "The Double as Immortal Self" 74). Rank maintains that since time immemorial, men were concerned with and afraid of their demise. Thus, in order to protect themselves against the consciousness of their mortality, they developed a body-soul dichotomy and associated the latter to their shadows:

[man] first saw his own image in it [his shadow], inseparable from himself and yet not only changing in its form but also disappearing at night ... this observation of the human shadow disappearing with the fertilizing sun to reappear with its return made it a perfect symbol for the idea of an immortal soul ... It is then ... not so much the resemblance of the shadow to the self as its appearance and disappearance, its regular return to life, as it were, which made the shadow a symbol of the returning soul still surviving in our spiritual belief in immortality. (74)

Nevertheless, this never-dying double of man, this "guardian angel, assuring immortal survival to the self" turned into "the announcer of death itself" (76). As Claire Rosenfield argues, the Double turns into the harbinger of "the division of the personality into two opposing forces, and a subsequent loss of a sense of identity and continuity in time"

(327). With the rise of psychoanalysis and Freud's model of psyche, the Double's domain expanded to every projection that could represent one aspect of a repressed desire. Nonetheless, as Živković has argued the motif of the Double resists any form of reductionist definition:

the 'value' of the double has seemed to reside in its resistance to definition, in its 'escapist' qualities, in the possibility it offers to the individual to imagine his self and reproduce himself in endless ways ... it obviously puts in question unities of character, time and space, doing away with chronology, three-dimensionality and with rigid distinctions between animate and inanimate objects, self and other, life and death. (122)¹⁶

Indeed, the phenomenon of doubling has been interpreted in conjunction with several other phenomena: it has been discussed in relation to the uncanny -elaborated on and developed in Freud's 1919 essay "The 'Uncanny'," in which the second iteration of an entity is perceived as strange, eerie and out of the bounds of normality; has shown affinity with the individual's conscience, in which the superego that exerts control over the ego dissociates itself from and haunts the individual -undoubtedly Edgar Allan Poe's *William Wilson* would be the prime literary example for this form of doubling; has been associated with twins, narcissism, delusional states, death etc., to name but a few. Nevertheless, in all its guises and associations, it seems to have maintained the duality Rank has ascribed to the original Double: the duality of being both an insurance against the destruction and disintegration of the self and "a reminder of the individual's mortality, indeed the announcer of death itself" ("The Double as Immortal Self" 76). This dual feature is also confirmed by Miller's assertion that "the modern double spells a fear of death, and is a form of defense against that fear, while also being, or becoming, itself deathly" (135). While one may not be able to present a comprehensive account of the Double, one could assert that the double is neither external nor internal, neither

¹⁶ A similar conclusion is offered by Gordon E. Slethaug: "despite ... attempts to categorize, elucidate, resolve differences, and validate categories through well-poised examples, [the double] will always remain duplicitous, dialogic, and relativized" (8).

exclusively complementary nor opposing, neither the self nor the other and to use Paul Coates' phrase in *Doubling, Distance and Identification in the Cinema*, "neither here nor there."

2.2 A World of Dualities

In his review of *The Tenant*, Stephen Farber, calls it "a Kafkaesque horror story, emphasizing how precarious our sense of self really is" (586). Indeed, the attack on Trelkovsky's self/identity is portrayed by the repeated doublings of the self (Williams 65). The process of Trelkovsky's disintegration of self is presaged in the opening credits of the film, in which the camera shows an objective view of the apartment building. The view unfolds by showing Trelkovsky looking down at the broken eave -broken because of the suicide of Simone Choule as Trelkovsky is told minutes later by the concierge- followed by the repetition of the same act by Simone Choule. Then, the camera moves away from this window and stops at the window of the washroom facing Simone Choule/Trelkovsky's apartment. The viewers are thus given a summary of the whole filmic narrative, though retrospectively understood: that Trelkovsky will be transformed into Simone Choule. Tijana Mamula in her discussion of *The Tenant* argues that this scene does not so much suggest "a priori identification" but the implication that Trelkovsky had been aware of Simone Choule's suicide before entering the apartment building (198), thus maintaining that

Trelkovsky's identification with Simone almost certainly precedes his entry into the building and very likely conditions it; the fantasy of another onto whose figure he will project all of his feelings of uncanny foreignness and compulsion to repeat seems to already be in place prior to either his viewing of the apartment or his actual encounter with Simone. (199)

Nevertheless, this rational explanation for a textual passage that is intended to be suggestive seems to have failed to take account of the associative and foreshadowing way that credit sequences often work. Similarly, Le Cain suggests that Trelkovsky and Simone Choule are already in the building before Trelkovsky's arrival. Nevertheless, the

explanation that he proposes for such an argument supports the point made in chapter one about the simultaneous existence of Trelkovsky and his double. In chapter one, it was noted that the fact that the address on Trelkovsky's identity card belongs to his previous apartment suggests the existence of his double in the apartment building. Accordingly, Le Cain suggests that if Trelkovsky is indeed present in the building before his arrival, it might be because Trelkovsky is but one "among countless others enacting parallel variations on a story of identity displacement" (131). With the possibility of such parallel existence, he argues that

the brooding figures in the lavatory window might be subject to a logic governed by a completely different plot, incidentally intruding on Trelkovsky's ... This might also explain why there is no one in the corridor when Trelkovsky answers a knock on his flat door. And maybe the other tenants' misdirected ire at Trelkovsky's alleged noise might be meant for 'another' Trelkovsky, who is, in fact, guilty of making it? (132)

On the other hand, should one acknowledge the foreshadowing significance of the credit sequence, one would find a visual, objective hint about Trelkovsky's possible schizophrenia. It has been argued that Trelkovsky's belief in the other tenants' plot to transform him into the former tenant is but a product of his schizophrenic and delusional state.¹⁷ While this argument is disputable based on several objective shots in the film, which reveal that inexplicable events do happen in the apartment building,¹⁸ the credit

¹⁷ For instance, Ain-Krupa's analysis of *The Tenant* in *Polanski: a life in exile* is based on Trelkovsky's schizophrenia.

¹⁸ For example, the morning after the housewarming party Trelkovsky holds in his new apartment, Trelkovsky takes two overflowing bags of trash out. On his way down, he meets Monsieur Zy and apologizes for the disturbance his guests had caused the other night while some trash falls down. Even more trash falls out of the bags as he goes down the stairs. Hurrying back to clean the mess after having dumped the trash in the trash bins, he finds no trace of the garbage on the stairs. Unlike most of scenes in the film that are shot through Trelkovsky's POV, all these scenes are shot objectively. These objective views suggest that mysterious events do take place in the apartment building and might also indicate that there indeed exists a plot on the part of the tenants to drive Trelkovsky insane. In this sense, Caputo's argument that it is not so much Trelkovsky's illness that raises question but "the pathogenesis of his behavior ... as the 'neighbours' are implicated in the trajectory of his crisis, although the extent of their tort or ill-intent remains ambiguous" (147) holds true. This also resonates with Faber's comment that "Polanski

sequence suggests a proof in support of diagnosing him with schizophrenia. After the scene of Simone Choule's reincarnation in Trelkovsky, the camera moves away and exposes the view of other windows in the apartment building. Other tenants are engaged in their quotidian tasks, such as making the bed. They are not looking at Trelkovsky's apartment as he will perceive them to be. Thus, this seamless joining of the two scenes might prompt the speculation that the transformation of Trelkovsky into Simone Choule occurs without the interference or awareness of other tenants, hence indicating Trelkovsky's schizophrenic state. In addition, his possible schizophrenia could be an indication of an association with the mechanism of projection. In this regard, C. F. Keppler also maintains that

[o]ften the conscious mind tries to deny its unconscious through the mechanism of 'projection,' attributing its own unconscious content (a murderous impulse, for example) to a real person in the world outside; at times it even creates an external hallucination in the image of this content. (25)

Therefore, it is possible to argue that Trelkovsky's unconscious desire for cross-dressing and becoming a woman in appearance is projected onto the neighbours' intention to turn him into a woman. Following this argument, the apparition of Simone Choule would be that "external hallucination in the image of this content," the content being his unconscious, repressed desire to become a woman.

After revealing shots of other tenants' windows, the camera stops on the view of the entrance door through which Trelkovsky enters the apartment building. However, this scene ends on a very curious note. In spite of his lead role in the film, Roman Polanski does not get a credit for it. From one aspect, one could speculate that his lack of an opening credit as an actor suggests a doubling between Trelkovsky and Polanski in that as Trelkovsky is no longer recognized as Trelkovsky by the end of the film, neither is

refuses to allow us to dismiss the character as a psychotic freak. Trelkovsky is not demented at the beginning; he is a sweet, Chaplinesque figure, and so his disintegration is doubly disturbing" (586).

Polanski acknowledged as the lead actor by not being given his due credit.¹⁹ From another aspect though, one could argue that Polanski -or rather Polanski's double, i.e. the actor, gets a "double" credit, as he enters the apartment building as actor when "Directed by Roman Polanski" appears at the end of the opening credits, as if the two credits he could have, have indeed dissolved into one.

Trelkovsky enters the apartment building to inquire about the vacant unit. The concierge reluctantly- and only after Trelkovsky offers her some money in compensation -takes him to see the apartment. Once more, the viewers encounter an image that presages the forthcoming, recurrent doublings: the image of the spiral staircase -spiral as an image of the vertiginous- leading to Simone's apartment. The same image evoking a sense of vertigo is once more reiterated in the image of the spiral wrapping of the bandages covering Simone Choule's body in the hospital. When Trelkovsky goes to the hospital to visit Simone Choule, he finds her on the bed bandaged all over. It is in this encounter that Trelkovsky arguably introjects and identifies with the confounded identity of the person underneath the bandages. As Williams asserts Trelkovsky's identification with Simone Choule is "with a mutilated woman, perversely conceived as already under the sign of division and lack" (72). In addition, the image of mummified Simone Choule -who lacks any obviously identifying features due to the bandages- both provokes and presages the issues of life and death -as manifest in Trelkovsky's double suicides- as well as the gender confusion that will be exposed in Trelkovsky's transvestism. This scene -yet with the difference that the figure underneath the bandages will arguably be Trelkovsky- is repeated at the end of the film, which will be discussed later.

Paul Coates argues that for a certain mentality "[t]he moment a person behaves differently from the way he or she habitually does, he is deemed to have become another person" (*The Double and the Other* 67). Accordingly, when Trelkovsky quits his usual

¹⁹ This speculation primarily occurred to me when I attended a screening of *The Tenant* among a group of students who did not know who Roman Polanski was. They were quite surprised when they were told the lead actor was the director himself. Thus, it is possible that many amateur film viewers have seen -and will keep seeing- the film without realizing who the lead actor is. One is also reminded of this lack at the end of the film due to the absence of any closing credits.

habits and starts taking on Simone Choule's behaviours, he is perceived as another person. While his gradual transformation could be due to his unconscious desire to turn into a woman (Williams 69), it could also be caused by the breakdown of one's psyche under an overwhelming stigmatizing force and external pressure to conform to and abide by the rules. As discussed in the preceding chapter, Trelkovsky is stigmatized and treated badly from the very beginning of his presence in the apartment building. For instance, while it is the responsibility of the concierge to show any applicant the vacant apartment, Trelkovsky must apologize and offer her money in return for the trouble of showing him the apartment; the trouble which is but one of her specified duties. When Monsieur Zy's wife sees him for the very first time, she perceives him as a man asking for charity. Monsieur Zy convinces him not to report the break-in incident to the police with the justification that he is not French and that the police might suspect him of things he has not done. Trelkovsky not only accepts all these impositions without any protest, but constantly apologizes for any possible disturbance he might have caused so as to have his presence accepted by the other tenants. His politeness and apologetic personality do indeed imply "a sense of inferiority" (Ain-Krupa 100).²⁰ Furthermore, his personal habits subtly change. While he was used to drinking coffee in the mornings and smoking Gauloises Bleu, he is offered the drink Simone Choule used to drink and the cigarette she used to smoke. He is also advised to take on the habits of the former tenant in the apartment so that he himself and other neighbours would be more comfortable. However, as Ain-Krupa has observed "there is a limit to what even he can take. The body can manage, but it is the psyche that folds when faced with the question of personal identity"

²⁰ This sense of inferiority is visually depicted through Trelkovsky's lower positions in respect to other people in various scenes. In this regard, J. Robert Craig argues that

Polanski often frames Trelkovsky against the strong verticals and horizontals of windows and doorways, or with his back against one edge of the frame. The latter technique is further emphasized by mise-en-scenes juxtaposing Trelkovsky in a lower, inferior position respective to another person in the scene. Thus at different times, he is shown in the insignificant role, when speaking with Zy, the concierge, his friend Scope, and even a street beggar, all of whom are framed towering over the tenant. (136).

Moreover, in his inferiority complex, he could be paralleled to Stiller as the narrator/Stiller comments "es fällt auf, wie häufig dieser Mensch sich glaubte entschuldigen zu müssen" (89) ('one is struck by the frequency with which this man felt he had to apologize' (75).)

(99). Hence, gradually Trelkovsky's partial identification with Simone Choule turns into a total assimilation. In this regard, one can argue that the apparition of Simone Choule as the double of Trelkovsky is the necessary requirement for this transformation to take place since the double "subjects its host to an ambivalent sexual agency" destabilizing one's gender "as the most essential specification of an essentialized idea of identity" (Webber 4). Before Simone Choule appears to Trelkovsky in the bathroom opposite his apartment window, Trelkovsky's tendency towards femininity -and Simone Choule as the representative of femininity- seems to be on the level of a superficial fascination. That is, he seems to be merely fascinated with and curious about things related to a woman/Simone Choule. For instance, he stares at and touches Simone's dress in her wardrobe after he moves in; he paints one of his nails with Simone's nail polish; and he is curious to read the book that belonged to Simone. However, his transformation into Simone starts only after the apparition of Simone. As Trelkovsky looks at her, she returns his look and starts unbandaging herself. This reciprocity through one look between Trelkovsky and Simone as doubles -one coming from the world of the living and one from the realm of the dead- could indicate that the latter is to occupy both Trelkovsky's body and psyche. This could be an illustration of Webber's assertion that "[h]ost and double can seldom share the same accommodation without one or the other being put to the stake; but then phantasms are adept at returning from the dead to haunt the home from which they have apparently been exorcised" (22). Indeed, it is Trelkovsky's turn to be evicted from this shared home.

The encounter between Trelkovsky and Simone is preceded by Trelkovsky's autoscopic encounter. Both of these confrontations and their fatal consequences are indeed foreshadowed by the uncanny presence of immobile figures in the bathroom facing Trelkovsky's window. The fact that they stand there motionless and keep staring blankly at the wall while Trelkovsky looks at them through a pair of binoculars ascribes to the former the same, uncanny status as Olympia, the automaton of *Der Sandmann*, and to the latter the one occupied by Nathanael. Although these figures are recognized by both Trelkovsky and the viewers as humans, it is their remoteness and distance that make them "as foreign and probably hostile to the self" (Coates, *Doubling, Distance and Identification* 7), rendering them the harbingers of Trelkovsky's horrible fate. If

Nathanael is driven to insanity after becoming aware that Olympia was not a flesh and blood being but an automaton, Trelkovsky's madness is marked by the moment of his autoscopic experience. Once in the bathroom, where he realizes the figures have been staring at the Egyptian hieroglyphs on the walls, he sees his self, i.e. his double, looking at him through a pair of binoculars from his own room. While before this encounter Trelkovsky had been the unseen voyeur, the look he shares with his male double disturbs his voyeuristic position. Hence, "voyeur and exhibitionist are united by a single look. The outward look of the voyeur becomes, in this apparition of the double, the self-regarding look of the narcissist" (Williams 79). This look is analogous to the narcissistic look he exchanges with his feminine specular image later.²¹ In addition, although distance entails partial identification (Coates, *Doubling, Distance and Identification* 7), the distance between Trelkovsky and his male double in the bathroom is obliterated by bringing into proximity what stands in the distance with the aid of binoculars, thus his total identification. Since the double is "the announcer of death itself" (Rank "The Double as Immortal Self" 76), and "the sight of the double freezes the self's relationship to itself in an image and that stasis itself replicates death" (Coates, *Doubling, Distance and Identification* 17), Trelkovsky's identification with his double is indeed an identification with death. However, considering that "death may be rewritten as transformation ... and a source of renewal in life" (84), one could say that Trelkovsky's death, the inevitability of which is presaged by Simone's, in a sense enables his double to exist; one needs to die so that the other might live on.²² It is indeed in this sense that the double, as Rank argues, becomes a double-edged sword; it is immortality at the cost of death. In addition, the fact that Trelkovsky first encounters his male double then Simone Choule as his female

²¹ In his discussion of the doubling between Dorian Gray and his portrait, Otto Rank maintains that the former's narcissistic, erotic attitude towards his self is possible only because "along with it the defensive feelings can be discharged by way of the hatred and feared double" (*The Double* 73). This assertion could also be true about Trelkovsky's narcissism and homosexuality- as argued by Williams (69) - in that his "defensive feelings" find their outlet through the apparition of his doubles.

²² This dichotomy of life and death is analogous to and suggested by the mummy-imagery of Simone Choule- and retrospectively by that of Trelkovsky -which evokes the ideas of death, rebirth and reincarnation.

double would lead one to speculate that the imminent death of the self suggested by the former could be replaced by the birth of the latter in Trelkovsky.

Moreover, the double as “the figure of the self-alienated self” (Coates, *The Double and the Other* 104) reflects Trelkovsky’s alienation not only from his body, whence his puzzlement about the meaning of selfhood and the rejection of his male body by masking it as a woman, but also his social alienation due to the society’s non-acceptance of his foreignness and his personality traits as Trelkovsky.²³ One may find his feeble resistance against this alienation in his double reiteration of his nationality in the police station. When the police officer asks Trelkovsky if his name is Russian, he responds that it is “Polish, Polish.” This double reiteration could suggest Trelkovsky’s alienation from his identity as a Pole and his dwindling sense of being due to which he is obliged to emphasize his nationality this way so that it might be registered and heard by others.

It is after seeing the two doubles that Trelkovsky’s transformation is accelerated and takes a more serious turn. Convinced that his neighbours have plotted to turn him into Simone Choule so that he would, likewise, defenestrate himself, and determined to prevent such a thing from happening, he masks himself in make-up, female dress and wig.²⁴ Finally, he doubles Simone Choule’s suicide by throwing himself out of the window twice. The final scene of the film doubles the scene of the hospital in which Simone Choule is shown bandaged on the bed lacking any identifying features. Should one interpret the Trelkovsky standing by the bed as the second apparition of his double and align his final scream with this subjective shot, one could argue that the bandaged individual is indeed the Trelkovsky who has lost his masculinity to his double. Therefore, one is able to dispute Mamula’s assertion that the final scene “reveals not ‘his’ perception of the scene, but a distanced, darkened and muted version of Simone’s original subjective” and that one cannot “discern, with any conviction, to whom the subjective

²³ Katarzyna Marciniak considers the significance of Trelkovsky’s marginalization as a foreigner in her article “Cinematic Exile: Performing the Foreign Body on Screen in Roman Polanski’s *The Tenant*.”

²⁴ This transformation is concurrent with the heightening of his delusional state. For instance, he witnesses a carnivalesque scene in which the neighbors beat Madame Gaderian and her daughter with sticks. Wearing a mask resembling Trelkovsky, she points up to him indicating the next possible/real victim.

belongs” (199).²⁵ He emits the scream only after being addressed as Simone by Stella and his male double in the hospital. While the scream could suggest a pathological indication of the synonymous relationship of one’s identity with one’s appearance (Bruzzi 142)²⁶- which suggests that in order to assume the identity of another, one would need to adopt the other’s appearance -it could also indicate the horror instigated by getting an external confirmation as to his transformation. This assumption could be further supported by his insistence on his identity as Trelkovsky before his suicide. Accordingly, in spite of his identity being split even at the height of his psychosis, by constantly repeating that he is not Simone Choule, Trelkovsky seems to be aware of his real identity. This, though a proof of the clinical accuracy of Polanski’s dramatization of psychosis, could also point to Trelkovsky’s last remnants of lucidity before his final, spontaneous act of madness, a cinematic visualization of Stoller’s assertion that the “core gender identity” of the transvestite holds no relation to the clothes he wears (qtd. in Bruzzi 150). Although these verbal reiterations seem to be employed to preserve a space of male subjectivity in the teeth of its very erosion, his masculinity is obliterated by literalizing the feminization imposed on him through cross-dressing (Mamula 189), something which is confirmed by being addressed as Simone, presumably receiving the final confirmation that his outer, apparent identity has indeed taken over his inner identity.

In addition, his scream ties doubling to time and infinity. Trelkovsky’s encounter with his double not only evokes the infinite doubling of Kane in the double mirrors in *Citizen Kane* (1941) or that of Banquo’s descendants in Polanski’s *Macbeth* (1971), but also of the reverberating echoes of the phone ringing -in the sense that a phone’s ringing is a repetition, an aural doubling- in Saramago’s *The Double*, announcing the arrival of yet another identical self. Accordingly, as Simone’s scream prefigures Trelkovsky’s fate, so

²⁵ This assertion clearly does not conceive the Trelkovsky standing by the bed as the double of the one lying on the bed.

²⁶ This assumption is developed in Bruzzi’s discussion of the film *Single White Female* (1992), in which Hedy tries to impersonate Allie by adopting her look.

does Trelkovsky's doubling of her scream foreshadow the fate of the next tenant.²⁷ This reflection and repetition of one character within another is, in fact, the *mise-en-abyme* characteristic of stories about the Double, which throws "the sign of identity into abysmal or groundless nonentity" (Webber 6).

2.3 *Stiller*: a Tale of Doubles

Andrew White defines alienation- *inter alia*- as "the individual's sense of self-estrangement and social dislocation; his feeling that he lives in a disturbed society with which he is at odds" (290). Furthermore, Koepke, considering the place of *Stiller* among various literary works of Max Frisch, ascribes to it the role of "a transition to a phase of more universal concern with the ills of the age, connected with the problem of identity in an alienated society" (8). Hence, as argued in the previous chapter, it is social expectations and impositions that both cause and reinforce Stiller's alienation not only from himself as a man/husband/artist but also from his surroundings and acquaintances. Therefore, considering that *Stiller* is the portrayal of an individual who "constantly plays with identities, masks, roles" (Sandberg 130), that in his social context "[a]lienation ... is programmed into the system," and that "society appears to be unchangeable in those features that cause alienation, [and] the individual is forced to make the adjustments" (151), it could be argued that this alienation results in Stiller's splitting of the self while the adjustment that he needs to make finds its expression through the mechanism of doubling. Nevertheless, the form of doubling in *Stiller* -one that is arguably the result of neurosis- appears not to be of the near-schizophrenic kind considered in *The Tenant* as the implication of a psychotic breakdown. Hence, considering the forms of doubling in *The Tenant* and *Stiller*, one might even hypothesize that a state of psychosis could engender explicit doubling, while one of neurosis would prompt implicit doubling.

²⁷ Polanski uses this form of ending, which doubles its beginning, in his rendition of *Macbeth*. Adding this ending to the original play, he has Donalbain visiting the witches, which doubles Macbeth and Banquo's visit at the beginning of the film, suggesting that he is to repeat the cycle of usurpation of which Macbeth was the originator.

The opening sentence of *Stiller*, “Ich bin nicht Stiller” (‘I am not Stiller’), indicates the narrator’s repudiation of the identity towards which he feels alienated -an identity that the society once more expects him to accept and live up to on his return to Switzerland. This negation and its subsequent reiterations are the narrator’s attempts to differentiate “his present from his former self, his own notion of self from the images others perceive of him, his authentic self from the roles he plays in society” (Schier 5). While the claim of the narrator/Stiller that he is not who he is perceived to be renders his identity double in his current state, it also points to and reflects an implicit doubling within the personality of the narrator/Stiller before his flight to America.

Before abandoning his life as Stiller and escaping to America, different social and personal roles were imposed on and expected of Stiller; mainly those of a husband, a talented artist, and a courageous soldier who would not fail to follow orders under any circumstances. Nevertheless, his real sense of self never conforms to and matches these roles, thus his failure in all of them. His experience in the Spanish Civil War and Sibylle’s take on that exemplify this nonconformity. After Stiller confesses to Sibylle that it was he who failed to shoot and not the rifle, Sibylle tells him “[d]u schämst dich, daß du so bist, wie du bist. Wer verlangt von dir, daß du ein Kämpfer bist, ein Krieger, einer, der schießen kann? Du hast dich nicht bewährt, findest du, damals in Spanien. Wer bestreitet es! Aber vielleicht hast du dich als jemand bewähren wollen, der du gar nicht bist” (269) (‘you’re ashamed of being as you are. Who demanded of you that you should be a fighter, a warrior, someone who can shoot? You feel you didn’t prove yourself there in Spain. Who’s denying it? But perhaps you were trying to prove yourself someone you just aren’t’ (230)). The fact that he tried to be -and for a time was- a person alien to his real self indeed indicates his internal split. This internal split is also manifest in his relationship with Julika. When he goes to Davos and pays his last visit to Julika before taking flight to America, he declares to Julika that he had never loved her (124). Thus, on those occasions that he appears to be the loving husband he is not his real self but an

actor playing a role.²⁸ For instance, when he becomes aware of Julika's illness, he insists that Julika should visit a doctor. Julika interprets this as an act "nur damit sein Gewissen beruhigt wäre; damit sein männlicher Egoismus keine Rücksicht mehr zu nehmen brauchte" (92) ('solely to salve his conscience, to free his masculine egoism from the need to be considerate' (77)). Or when he had outbursts of anger, he would come up with ways to make it up to her, like buying her favourite flower or cooking her favourite dish (78). However, the discrepancy between his real self and the role he was expected to play would make him resume the same brutal treatment with her. In addition, the fact that others constantly remind him that he has a wonderful wife and that she does not deserve to have a husband like him compels him even more to try to live up to the expected image of the husband that she truly deserves. In this sense, one could argue that the character Stiller -even before his flight to America and his adoption of a new identity- was a double personality by trying to be who he, in fact, was not, by trying to "craft a persona that fit and masked him, a futile effort that was accompanied by feelings of inferiority, self-inflation, and mediocrity" (Sandberg 132). This assertion could be supported by Butler's comment on Stiller's life before his act of attempted suicide:

Until the abortive suicide attempt, the Stiller which the protagonist is intent on rejecting did *not* live, if living means leading an authentic, creative existence. Stiller's biography was indeed a non-life in the sense that he was forced into playing a variety of roles, not least that of forceful husband and lover. It is the limitations of the other characters, their circumscribed concept of selfhood, which prevent them from distinguishing between surface biographical reality and

²⁸ It is also possible to suspect that what the narrator/Stiller is doing at the moment of writing these notes is a retrospective projection of an image of Stiller that would render Stiller an actor playing roles while the case could arguably be that it is the narrator/Stiller who is in fact playing a role as he writes: "wer denn soll lesen, was ich in diese Hefte schreibe! Und doch, glaube ich, gibt es kein Schreiben ohne die Vorstellung, daß jemand es lese, und wäre dieser Jemand nur der Schreiber selbst. Dann frage ich mich auch: Kann man schreiben, ohne eine Rolle zu spielen? Man will sich selbst ein Fremder sein. Nicht in der Rolle, wohl aber in der unbewußten Entscheidung, welche Art von Rolle ich mir zuschreibe, liegt meine Wirklichkeit" (330) ('Who is going to read what I have written in these notebooks? And yet I believe that no one writes without the idea that somebody is going to read what he writes, if this somebody is only the writer himself. Then I ask myself, can one write without playing apart? One tries to be a stranger to oneself. My reality does not lie in the part I play, but in the unconscious decision as to what kind of part I assign myself' (287)).

existential reality. It is Stiller's acute awareness of the chasm between the two notions of identity that make him, for all his absurd pretensions and overweening egocentricity (clearly noted by Mr. White!), an oddly attractive figure. (236)

While before his flight to America Stiller's doubling of the self is implicit, it turns into an intensification of the splitting of the self after his return to his homeland. Logi Gunnarsson states that the novels with the theme of the double, on a socio-psychological level, present the conflict between the society and the individual:

The individual feels that his identity or existence is rejected or leveled by societal norms. But the individual has also internalized the social expectations to such an extent that this conflict repeats itself as an internal division in the individual. The individual can resist society only by generating a new self that opposes society or is strong enough to gain power in society, whereas the old self still bows to it. Thus, the conflict between the individual and society must repeat itself inner-psychically. (184)

Thus, in this sense, the character James White is that "new self" which helps the narrator/Stiller oppose and resist his society while the character Stiller -exposed in his notes- signifies that "internal division" within his psyche consequent upon the internalization of the societal impositions and expectations. The narrator/Stiller's adoption of the identity of James White not only suggests that "one's factual biography" should not necessarily equate "one's self-identity," it also signifies the ego-ideal status of the figure of the Double in that an individual might -in an attempt to flee from the alienating reality of one's life- find solace in the adoption of an ideal self which is albeit imaginary (Revesz 48). Indeed, one can assert that neither Stiller nor James White represents the real identity of the narrator. This assertion could be further supported by Gunnarsson's use of *Stiller* as a literary proof of the role of philosophical concepts related to multiple personality cases. In his discussion, Gunnarsson brings up the case of BI and her second self, Sally as discussed in Morton Prince's *The Dissociation of a Personality*, in which the latter claims for "the controversial view that she need not be identical to someone whose arms and legs are also her own arms and legs" (11). He parallels this

case to *Stiller*'s narrator's status in which the claim of the narrator that he is James White and not the missing Stiller, should be taken as "true" even if both Stiller and James White share the same body. Thus he agrees with the narrator/Stiller's defense attorney that

there is only one human being. He used to answer to the name 'Stiller,' is now in prison, and calls himself by another name. But this does not make the prisoner's utterances any less comprehensible. Even if Mr. White shares a body with Herr Stiller, we think we can understand what he means by saying that he -White- is not Stiller. (12)²⁹

In other words, the case of Stiller/James White proves that "a person's reality lies neither in the one nor in the other but in the split between how one is and how one *could* or *would* like to be. It is this schizoid split, the originary split of the subject in the Lacanian imaginary register" that in fact characterizes the identity of Stiller (48). Therefore, on one hand, there exists an explicitly opposing -though simultaneously complementary-doubling relationship between the Swiss Stiller and his alter ego, the American James Larkins White. While the former represents someone who seems to have "resigned himself to living within the bounds which society has set for him," the latter symbolizes a person who evokes "the potential" (Fickert 480). In other words, *Stiller* could be categorized among those novels in which doubles, of the kind Rosenfield terms "psychological Doubles" (328), present two opposite characters "the one representing the socially acceptable or conventional personality, the other externalizing the free, uninhibited, often criminal self" (328). While as a Swiss sculptor Stiller is obliged to abide by the conventional, steadfast rules of his society, as an American cowboy and adventurer, he gets the opportunity to be critical of those very rules and attack the rigidity

²⁹ In his analysis of the figure of the Double in its psychiatric and cultural guises, Bruno Estañol maintains that due to the uncertainty concerning the figure of the Double, it is impossible to assert with any certainty the identity of Stiller/narrator. Thus, he argues that "El hombre a quien todos reconocen como Stiller niega sinceramente ser ese evidente personaje. Stiller puede tener un trastorno disociativo de la identidad, ser un impostor, o realmente ser otro. Como es usual en las narraciones sobre el doble la incertidumbre o la solución del enigma se transfiere al lector" (268) ('the man that all recognize as Stiller sincerely denies being this evident character. Stiller can have a dissociative identity disorder, be an imposter, or in fact be someone else. As it is common in the narrative about the double, the uncertainty or the solution to the enigma is transferred to the reader' (My translation)).

of the Swiss mindset and worldview. For instance, making an analogy between Switzerland and his cell, the narrator/Stiller writes that “[m]eine Zelle ... ist klein wie alles in diesem Land, sauber, so daß man kaum atmen kann vor Hygiene, und beklemmend gerade dadurch, daß alles recht, angemessen und genügend ist” (13-14) (‘My cell ... is small, like everything in this country, so clean one can hardly breathe for all the hygiene, and oppressive precisely because everything is just right. No more and no less. Everything in this country is oppressively adequate’ (11)). While Stiller used to be impotent and a failure not only in his marriage with Julika but also in his affair with Sibylle, James White -emblematic of the double as the “agent of free- wheeling virility” (Webber 17)- is the attractive, virile man who has had affairs with married women and who has even been able to kill his rivals. Whereas Stiller was forced into playing the role of a caring lover and husband before and in regards to Julika and always had to consider her fragility, James White, though admitting to Julika’s attractiveness and telling her that he loves her,³⁰ does not feel the need to be considerate of her delicate state of health. Accordingly, when the narrator/Stiller is taken to Stiller’s studio, his counsel asks him to be considerate of Julika and to admit that he is Stiller

Wie lange wollen Sie diese unglückliche Frau denn noch quälen! ... haben Sie denn gar kein Gefühl für diese Frau? Es ist ja ungeheuerlich, was Sie dieser zarten Frau zumuten. Statt daß sie endlich das Geständnis geben! Nun kommt diese Frau von Paris, Ihnen zuliebe, hat Ihre Tanzschule aufgegeben, Ihnen zuliebe, und Sie behandeln Sie - Man kann sich wirklich fragen, womit ein Wesen wie Frau Julika es verdient hat, mit Ihnen verheiratet zu sein! (367-368)

How much longer are you going to torment this unfortunate woman? ... have you no feeling for this woman? It’s monstrous the way you treat this frail woman. Instead of making up your mind to confess at last! Now this woman has come all

³⁰ Although Peter Eli Gordon argues that “[o]nce drawn into the mystery surrounding Stiller’s disappearance, the imposter finds himself gradually assuming the habits and haunts of his doppelgänger, even adopting a quiet domesticity with the wife that Stiller (the real one) had earlier abandoned”(1), the fact that he keeps denying that he is the missing man and after his second marriage with Julika he still remains distant and detached, might suggest not the assumption of Stiller’s habits per se, but an indication of a fractured and split psyche torn between his old identity as Stiller and his new self as James White.

the way from Paris for your sake, has given up her dancing school for your sake, and you treat her -One may really wonder how a person like Frau Julika can have deserved to be married to you! (317)

Whereas such accusatory statement would give Stiller a bad conscience, they have no effect as such on James White and he still keeps denying that he is Stiller.

Furthermore, although the narrator/Stiller denies having any relationship with and any understanding of Stiller, his tales seem to suggest otherwise. As discussed in the previous chapter, the narrator/Stiller could be considered -according to Sartre- an individual guilty of bad faith for consciously denying his true self. Hence, arguably the identity that he denies can be seen as “[t]he Double ... born of what Sartre would term the bad faith with which one disowns half of one’s life, which then carries on living in the guise of a self condemned as other” (Coates, *The Double and the Other* 36). Nevertheless, this inner duality compels him to fabricate tales onto whose fictional characters he can project the features and the acts for which Stiller had been blamed. In this sense, the fictional characters function as the doubles of the narrator/Stiller since “[t]he personae of dreams, fiction about dreams, and perhaps fiction itself are arguably doubles of the dreamer-writer” (Slethaug 17). This doubling strategy arguably enables the narrator/Stiller to protect his adopted identity as James White against being accused of those attributes and acts.

One’s name is a criterion that gives an image of one’s identity with certain attributes to others and whereby the others recognize that individual. Thus, when one changes one’s identity, it could suggest that one no longer fits within and corresponds to the image previously construed by him or by the society. Therefore, it could be argued that the narrator/Stiller chooses a fictitious name under which he attempts to create a new self for himself and through which he tries to distance himself from not only his self, but also from the past pertinent to that self. Moreover, this change of name renders ineffective the social rules whose rupturing would bring blame on the individual named Stiller and not James White. In this sense, the narrator/Stiller’s final flight could be seen as a flight via the act of writing. It is also worth mentioning the duality of the name “White” as argued

by Fickert. On the one hand, “White” or “Weiß” suggests the tabula rasa “the blank page on which the character remains to be written or come to self-realization.” On the other hand, should it be taken as a verb, “to whiten out or whitewash (weißen), [it] can convey an opposite meaning, the concealment of the actual state of affairs” (479). In this sense, the name that the narrator introduces himself with becomes an indication of its own falsity and duality.

One of the tales that the narrator/Stiller tells his warder is a re-articulation of the story of *Rip Van Winkle*. So, he introduces the character as a man whose

Kopf war voll sogenannter Gedanken, die mit seiner Wirklichkeit wenig zu tun hatten. Seine Wirklichkeit, ein gar braves Weib, die jedermann im Dorf nur bedauern oder bewundern konnte, hatte es denn auch nicht leicht mit ihm. Rip fühlte es wohl, daß er einen Beruf haben müßte, einen männlichen Beruf, und liebte es, sich als Jäger auszugeben, denn dies hatte den Vorteil, daß er sich tagelang umhertreiben konnte, wo ihn niemand sah. (71)

head was full of so-called thoughts, which had little to do with his reality. His reality, a good little wife whom everyone in the village could only pity or admire, didn't have an easy time with him. Rip recently felt he ought to have a trade, a masculine trade, and he liked to pretend he was a hunter, which had the advantage of allowing him to roam around for days on end where no one saw him. (59)

This narration corresponds to the characterization of Stiller as a man who -according to Julika- has always been engaged in fantasies (57), a man who might have been expected to have a more masculine and lucrative job -as he tells Julika “Du hattest sehr strenge Proben, jaja, und ich hatte leicht reden mit meiner Lehmerei, wo es nichts ausmachte, ob ich arbeitete oder nicht” (147-148) (‘you had very strenuous rehearsals, yes, yes, and I had an easy time with my clay bashing, where it didn't matter whether I worked or not’ (125)), and a man whose new identity now allows him to roam around in fantastical tales of adventure. In addition, the portrayal of Rip van Winkle's wife as one whom people would either pity or admire is analogous to the portrayal of Julika whom people would either pity, due to her frail state of health and constant tiredness after her hard ballet

rehearsals (125-126), or would admire for her beauty, nobility and her perseverance in ballet dancing in spite of her illness.³¹ Considering these analogies, the fictional texts of James White seem to bear a double-ness, which reveals the presence of the Swiss Stiller underneath their American cover.

The other story that he recounts is that of a chemist named Isidore who abandons his wife and children and leaves with the French Foreign Legion. While away from his home, “Er vergaß seine Apotheke, versteht sich, wie andere ihre kriminelle Vergangenheit. Mit der Zeit verlor Isidor sogar das Heimweh nach dem Land, das seine Heimat zu sein den schriftlichen Anspruch stellte” (42) (‘he forgot his chemist’s shop, of course, as others forgot their criminal past. In time Isidore even lost his homesickness for the country that claimed in writing to be his home’ (34)). Abandoning the wife and forgetting one’s place of work and homeland are indeed the narrative projections of Stiller’s abandonment of his wife, his studio and his home country.³² In addition, the modifications that the narrator/Stiller brings into this story when he tells it to Julika are further textual proofs that Isidore is the projected double of both Stiller and the narrator/Stiller. Accordingly, he omits the fact that Isidore had five children and instead of ending the story with Isidore shooting the birthday cake when he shows up at home for the last time, he finishes it with his own dream -a dream that he recurrently registers in his notes- that his hands were covered with scars (46).³³

³¹ In fact, Stiller’s description of Julika as a “crystal water-fairy” in the following quotation not only signifies her simultaneous pitiable and admirable state but also places her in the vicinity of the folk world depicted more fully in the Rip Van Winkle story: “Ich habe eine wunderbare Frau, ich freue mich jedesmal auf das Wiedersehen, und jedesmal, wenn sie da ist, komme ich mir vor wie ein ölig, verschwitzter, stinkiger Fischer mit einer kristallinen Wasserfee! (98) (‘I’ve got a wonderful wife, I’m delighted every time I see her again, and whenever she’s there I feel like a greasy, sweaty, stinking fisherman with a crystal water-fairy’ (82-3)).

³² One cannot help but wonder if it was not a matter of mere coincidence that Stiller/narrator says Isidore leaves with the Foreign Legion only after he hears his warder, Knobel, saying that after all efforts were in vain to find the missing Stiller, people came to this conclusion that he had joined the Foreign Legion (12).

³³ Although this image of the crucifixion evokes the theme of religion and aligns with Rolf’s religious solution offered to Stiller in the epilogue - i.e. finding authentic existence by believing in god- the fact that Stiller resigns himself to a life of solitude and inactivity, refraining from talking about himself, might suggest the inefficacy of any solution - let alone a religious one- to the identity dilemma of Stiller/Stiller. While Kierkegaard suggests the religious as the solution for it “encompasses the full scope of human potential” (Watts 190), heroes of Frisch’s novels “know no earthly protective father and cannot conceive of

In another tale, the narrator/Stiller recounts his longings for a mulatto named Florence who was soon married to a U.S. Army sergeant whom the narrator/Stiller describes as a man “mit den schmalen Lenden eines Löwen und mit den Schultern eines Michel-angelo-Sklaven” (190) (‘with the slender loins of a lion and the shoulders of a Michelangelo slave’ (162)). While the sergeant could be characterized as the opposing, fictional double of Stiller in his manly, potent features, the mulatto functions as projected double of both Julika and Sibylle. On one hand, in her opposing role to Julika, Florence embodies the projected wish of Stiller to have “a passionate relationship with an erotically desirable, healthy woman who dances in an uninhibited way” (Sandberg 133). This, on the other hand, assigns to her the role of Sibylle’s double in her health, eroticism and her role as Stiller’s mistress. In addition, as Stiller was impotent in his marriage to Julika for “Julika ihre Wollust nie mit ihm erlebte” (100) (‘Julika never experienced voluptuousness with him’ (84)), the narrator/Stiller also admits to such impotence in regards to Florence, whence his confession that “ich wußte sehr wohl, daß ich diesem Mädchen nie genügen könnte” (189) (‘I knew very well that I could never content this girl’ (160)). Moreover, after he sees Florence dancing, he says that he felt as though he was crippled “in seiner körperlichen Ausdruckslosigkeit” (188) (‘in his inexpressive white man’s body’ (160)).³⁴ The fact that the narrator/Stiller makes a link between the whiteness of his body and his inability to content the mulatto girl would, in turn, reveal the not-so-well-hidden link between White and Stiller. On one hand, considering the evocation of impotence in whiteness, the name that the narrator/Stiller adopts exposes the umbilical cord still connecting him to Stiller as the greatest issue of the latter was his impotence. On the other hand, Stiller, like the narrator, felt uneasy in his body. One finds Stiller’s reproach and disgust towards his body when the narrator/Stiller notes “Stiller schwärmte von den

a heavenly one” (White, *The Reluctant Modernist* 220). Therefore, although at the end of the novel the possibility of a religious solution is discussed by Rolf, it is not accepted by Stiller.

³⁴ The literal translation of “in seiner körperlichen Ausdruckslosigkeit” is “in his physical inexpressiveness.” Hence, the subsequent interpretations of “whiteness” and “impotence” are based on the translation of the phrase in *I am not Stiller*.

Kindern im Strandbad, von der Haut der Kinder, und auch die menschlichen Körper im Ballett, zum Beispiel, begeisterten ihn immer wieder. Seine Begeisterung hatte etwas Schmerzliches, etwas von der hoffnungslosen Sehnsüchtigkeit eines Verkrüppelten” (109) (‘Stiller was enchanted by the children in the lakeside bathing-place, by the children’s skin; and the human bodies in the ballet, for example, always delighted him. There was something painful about this enthusiasm, something of the hopeless longing of a cripple’ (92)).

Furthermore, it has been stated that the cat the narrator/Stiller was obliged to take care of symbolically signifies Stiller’s failures in all his roles and tasks, including his marriage to Julika (Fickert 483): that the narrator/Stiller’s tales about the cat symbolize Stiller’s cruel treatment of Julika (Sandberg 127). Considering this symbolism, when the narrator/Stiller comments that “wenn ich Stöckelschuhe höre, denke ich an Florence; leider fällt mir dabei auch immer die Katze ein” (194) (‘I think of Florence whenever I hear high-heeled shoes; unfortunately the cat always comes to my mind as well’ (165)), the cat symbolizes the role of the double as a pursing and reproachful conscience.

Finally, in his tale of the discovery of Carlsbald Caverns, the narrator/Stiller narrates the confrontation of two doubles, both named Jim, only one of whom comes alive out of the newly found cavern.³⁵ This tale has been argued to symbolize a journey to the hidden layers of the unconscious (Fickert 480, Pender 130) resulting in Stiller’s finding his new self (Koepke 132) whereas his struggle with the double suggests “the difficulties which he has encountered, and is still encountering, in his attempt to come to terms with himself” (Pender 130). Accordingly, it is possible to view the death of the double as an

³⁵ Inferring that the James White who survived the cave incident could be James White as the narrator (based on his reply to his warder’s question of whether he is the same person – “das gerade nicht! Aber was ich selber erlebt habe, sehen Sie, das war genau das gleiche – genau” (172) (“no way! But what I’ve been through myself, you see, was exactly the same-exactly” (145)), is nevertheless problematic should one consider the difference between the two names. Andrew White points out that the name of the cave explorer is James Larkin White while the narrator signs his name as James Larkins White when he receives Stiller’s rifle and boots (132). He argues that this extra “s” cannot be a mere accident or a mistake in printing, but that it is a clue -among other hints- towards realizing that the narrator is not identical with the cave discoverer named White (300). However, this extra “s,” which curiously enough is omitted in the English translation of the novel, could prompt one to speculate that in its grammatical function of rendering a noun/name plural, it suggests the duality of the narrator’s character: Stiller as James Larkins White.

indication of the death of Stiller's identity and the survival of the identity of James White. It is through the death of the former that the latter gains potency, the lack of which the double emblemizes.³⁶ Nevertheless, on another level, the fight with the double is indeed the fight with the self.³⁷ Hence, the death of the double-qua-Stiller prefigures the death/disintegration of the identity of the narrator-qua-James White. This disintegration - as evident in the narrator/Stiller's confrontation with his past in Stiller's studio- will be discussed in the following chapter.

2.4 Conclusion: The Double and Solitude

The shadowy double of the poet in Musset's *The December Night* introduces itself to the poet as neither a "god", nor a "demon," and as one that would always pursue the subject.

Wherever you wander, there shall I,
 And when your time has come to die
 I'll come and sit upon your grave.
 Heaven has entrusted me your heart,
 When you have trouble to impart
 Seek me without disquietude.
 I'll follow you along your way;
 But touch your hand I never may.
 My friend my name is Solitude

³⁶ Otto Rank argues that the Double is often associated with the theme of impotence (*The Double* 56).

³⁷ One might even speculate that the fight with the double reflects and symbolizes the fight with the one's imposed societal identity.

And indeed, solitude is and represents a second self whose touch could signify the disintegration of one's self. In his interpretation of the poem, Otto Rank argues that the figure of the double representing Solitude emphasizes "the sociability with one's own self, objectified as a duplication" (*The Double* 23). This statement makes it possible to draw the conclusion that in solitude -in particular one that is imposed on an individual- the individual might start splitting the self, hence a possible way of escape out of the involuntary solitude. On the other hand, in his study on the nuances of solitude in modernist fiction, Engelberg deems solitude synonymous with terms such as "aloneness, loneliness, isolation, estrangement, exile, and alienation" (8). While he maintains that solitude can be beneficial -in that it is a way through which an individual can reach self-knowledge and enlightenment- he also stresses its devastating consequences for it might result in self-contempt (8). In addition, he characterizes modernist solitude as a state in which "[t]he solitary no longer merely refuses Society to embrace, say, Nature, but rejects Society *and* Nature, an act that forces an inevitable confrontation with the Self" (42), i.e. one's confrontation with one's double.³⁸ In other words, solitude is that which could engender the splitting of the self. Following this argument, while Trelkovsky's confrontation with his double could arguably be caused by the imaginary hallucination of his schizoid psyche - in pure psychological terms- it could also be argued that his sense of alienation from his acquaintances and estrangement from his environment are the factors that cause -or at least contribute to- his mental breakdown and the apparition of his double through his visual perception. On the other hand, in *Stiller*, the narrator/Stiller seems to have tried to overcome his sense of loneliness and isolation by constantly inventing a double figure to share his loneliness with. Thus, he admits that

Irgendeinen inneren Ausweg fand ich stets, eine süße oder eine quälende Erinnerung, ein leidenschaftliches Gespräch mit einem unsichtbaren Menschen, den es meistens überhaupt nicht gab, doch ich erfand ihn, um nicht allein zu sein,

³⁸ In Existentialist terms, nature is that which dictates to the self what the self is. Hence, its rejection would indeed require one to take on the project of self-definition.

oder Hoffnung auf eine großartige Begegnung an der nächsten oder übernächsten Straßenecke. Heißt das Alleinsein? (335)

I always found some inner escape route, a tender or tormented recollection, a passionate conversation with an invisible person who generally didn't exist at all, but whom I invented in order not to be alone, or the hope of a magnificent encounter at the next street corner or the next street corner but one. Is that solitude? (288)

For instance, in his tale of the discovery of Carlsbald Cavern, he creates his double not only to share his solitude but also to establish his identity through the other's annihilation. In fact, his comment that "Es ist schwer, allein und ohne Zeugen zu wissen, was man in einsamer Stunde glaubt erfahren zu haben, schwer, ein Wissen zu tragen, das ich nimmer beweisen oder auch nur sagen kann" (334) ('It is difficult, alone and without witness, to know what one believes one has learnt in a solitary hour, difficult to carry information that can never be proved nor even uttered' (287)) justifies his use of well-known literary and real figures to convey his own experiences for these characters would act as witnesses to the truth of his beliefs born in and out of his solitude.

In addition, Engelberg argues that "when Self confronts Self, what emerges is a reductive, self-reflexive image that reinforces solitude, leaving a Self burdened with fear, with a sense of vulnerable mortality, or with disgust" (42). This description is indeed analogous to the uncanny and fatal consequences of one's encounter with one's double. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Trelkovsky's confrontation with his double signifies his imminent death while the narrator/Stiller's struggle with his double in the cave and the death of the latter are heralds of the disintegration and transformation of the former's identity.

Finally, the cause-and-effect relationship between solitude and doubling could indeed provide an alternate answer to the question that McKibbin poses in his study of the horror in Polanski's cinema. He thus wonders "What is it, Polanski asks, that makes it so difficult for one to stand one's own company? He provides a possible answer that Polanski might give: "that it is not being alone, so much as being invaded by past

presences” (55). While this could be a valid, possible answer, one, nevertheless, might provide another possibility; that such being alone with one’s self creates the fear that one might inevitably be compelled to split the self only to share the heavy burden of loneliness with a second self.

Chapter 3

3 The Failure: The End of Performance

In chapter one, the discussion centered around the possible causes and the portrayal of the conflict between the protagonists' sense of self and the self they are expected to conform to. In chapter two, the defense mechanisms that the protagonists adopted -arguably those of doubling and projection- in an effort to secure a subjective identity for themselves in the throes of the external assaults and impositions were analyzed. A logical follow-up discussion to these two chapters would be determining the success or the failure of the defense mechanisms and the protagonists' attempts at denial/assertion of their identities. Hence, this chapter presents the argument that the attempted suicides of the protagonists, the Munchesque scream of Trelkovsky after his suicidal jumps, and the silence and inactivity of Stiller after being condemned to assume his old identity, could indicate the inefficacy and failure of these defense mechanisms. Accordingly, the various, possible meanings of suicide will be taken into account. On the one hand, it will be maintained that the protagonists' decisions to commit suicide might indicate both their last defense against the imposed conformity -since the latter alternative seems worse- and their existential freedom, for suicide not only enables them to take control of death, thus of their identity, but also to make an effect in the world. Before their suicide/attempted suicide, both protagonists are ineffectual men. They suffer from inferiority complexes and are not accepted by their respective societies and acquaintances as they are. Hence, their acts of suicide could be taken as acts of courage and self-determination, not possibly to have an effect on the lives of others, but at least to have one on their own lives. As both protagonists seek to deny an identity, Trelkovsky's first suicide attempt gives him the opportunity to deny being Simone Choule whereas Stiller's suicide attempt makes it possible for him to try starting his life anew under a different identity. On the other hand, it will also be noted that their attempted suicides reflect not only the disintegration of their identities, but also the failure of doubling as a defense mechanism against the disintegration of identity and a substitute suicide through the abandonment of the alienated and unaccepted self.

Furthermore, it will be discussed how the two works are related to, incorporate and portray existential and absurdist themes. Both Polanski's *The Tenant* and Frisch's *Stiller* have been compared to the literary works of various authors who are either classified as Absurdist/Existentialist or whose works deal with issues pertinent to these philosophical and literary movements. For instance, Nixon outlines the similarities one could draw between Samuel Beckett's *Malone Dies* and Frisch's *Stiller* (324); McKibbin describes Trelkovsky's apologetic behavior and his acceptance of punishment as neurotic conditions and attributes this "*neurotic state receiving punishment*" to "the Kafkan side" of Polanski's oeuvre (53); Le Cain finds the image of "the modest office clerk becoming entrapped in a paranoid scenario" (123) reminiscent of Kafka and his "focus on hysterical subjectivity disastrously engaging with normality" to be an invocation of *The Double* of Dostoyevsky, which Polanski attempted but failed to film in the mid-1990s (124), to name but a few.

3.1 The Newly Former Tenant

The place of the individual within and in relation to society, the constituents of the individual's identity, the degree to which one's identity could be determined, attacked, and altered by society, along with many more alterations of the same central motif -the relationship between individual and society- constitute the recurrent motifs in the cinema of Roman Polanski. Such motifs inevitably link his cinema with the literary and philosophical movement of Existentialism and as its offshoot, Absurdism. In fact, Helena Goscilo makes such a connection by pointing out the thematic similarity between Jean-Paul Sartre's play *No Exit* and cinema of Polanski:

Jean-Paul Sartre's play *No Exit* ... with its three *dramatis personae* at the mercy of one another's relentless gaze (*le regard d'autrui* whereby everyone finds the self reflected, literally and figuratively, in others' pupils), most precisely delineates the human condition à la Polanski, whose films emphasise eyes, keyholes, glasses, binoculars and mirrors. (24)

In addition, in a study on the incorporation of absurdist themes in Polanski's cinema, Ewa Mazierska characterizes many of his films as absurdist for not only do they depict "the lack of harmony in human life and the consequences of this situation" (28), but also the recurrent Polanskian motifs including "the similarity between the beginnings and the endings, the sparse use of dialogue, and frequent use of dreams and nightmares" evoke the director's preoccupation with absurdist concepts (28). In addition, Paul Coates asserts that while one may not be able to pinpoint Polanski's films as adhering to one genre or another for "Polanski is both 'inside' and 'outside' the genre system," the absurd is the genre "closest to his heart" (*Cul-de-Sac in Context* 93). Polanski's interest in absurdist themes and the Theatre of the Absurd in particular is evident in his early short films such as *Mammals* (1961), *Le Gros et le maigre* (1961), and *Two Men and a Wardrobe* (1958), and later in his feature films *Knife in the Water* (1962) and *Cul-de-Sac* (1966). These films, with their Beckettian settings, black and white lighting and plots involving two characters playing power games, can indeed be categorized as absurdist films. Furthermore, Mazierska outlines three forms conveying absurdist concerns in his cinema:

The first occurs where there is a conflict between two or three people that cannot be resolved in a satisfactory way. This conflict can be seen as the cause of an absurd situation or catalyst allowing the character to realize that his life lacks harmony. The second category, which I call 'inner discord,' refers to the characters who appear to be in conflict with themselves. In the most serious cases they are schizophrenics. The third category encompasses the situation in which a protagonist who is healthy in mind cannot reconcile even his most basic interests and rights with the world in which he finds himself. In this case the entire world is absurd. (28)

While *The Tenant* is placed under the second form of absurdism as outlined above, one may wonder if it could also embody the first and third forms of absurdism, thus defying categorization. Categorizing *The Tenant* as the portrayal of an "inner discord" comes naturally should one consider Trelkovsky's schizophrenia as a mental illness to which he was prone or with which he was afflicted before his settlement in the new apartment; thus his internal conflict with himself. This assertion could be supported -in addition to the

discussion of the opening credits suggesting a case of schizophrenia in the previous chapter- by mentioning Trelkovsky's feeling of suffocation in the church during Simone Choule's funeral ceremony. In this scene, Trelkovsky perceives that the priest's sermon, with all the horrible images of death and decay, is directed at him. Thus, he feels he is suffocating and runs out of the church. Nonetheless, if one were to acknowledge that his schizophrenia is due to the oppressive conditions of his apartment building, his stigmatization and humiliation -thus his isolation from his colleagues and his inability to hold any social gathering at or invite any friends to his apartment³⁹- and not an illness he was already afflicted with, then *The Tenant* could also be positioned under the third category of absurdism in which his whole universe becomes a scene of absurdity, and his healthy state of mind is altered due to his failure to "reconcile even his most basic interests and rights with the world in which he finds himself" (28). In fact, by situating *The Tenant* in this category of absurdism, one is able to ascribe another level of meaning to the scene in the church and Trelkovsky's feeling of suffocation, in which sense it would prefigure Trelkovsky's conflict with the established norms and expectations of his neighbors and his failure to fulfill his needs and interests without being judged and persecuted by others. When Trelkovsky enters the church and takes his seat, for some moments he is under the penetrating gaze of a girl, who is later introduced as the disabled daughter of Madame Gaderian. Then he notices Stella sitting couple of seats ahead of him. He changes his place, sits in a row behind her, and voyeuristically stares at her. Later, when the priest starts his sermon, Trelkovsky wants to light a cigarette, yet remembering that it is against the church laws to do so he puts the cigarette back. Thus, it is possible to see, in this scene, the very first traces of the bigger conflict that he will encounter with the church-like rules of his apartment building -e.g. the interdiction of making noise under any circumstances. Therefore, it is in this sense that one could argue that "schizophrenia, as depicted by Polanski, is a person's reaction to extreme alienation

³⁹ For instance, when he is dancing with Stella at her friend's apartment, she suggests going to his apartment to spend the night with each other. While he momentarily agrees, remembering that that such a thing would not be tolerated by his landlord and other neighbours, he is obliged to make up a lie and tell her "my place is a bit ... well, it's a bit difficult. In fact, it's impossible ... I've been repainting and the place is in chaos." When Stella still insists that they could at least spend a couple of hours there, he is obliged to tell yet another lie, that his "uncle is just up from the country, staying a few days."

and to an assault on his freedom” (43). Schizophrenia in *The Tenant*, is arguably the effect of alienation and not its cause, compelling Trelkovsky to ““hide himself” in a different, imaginary person and invent narratives which allow him to lead a parallel life” (43). Finally, one could argue that *The Tenant* could also be appropriately situated under the first category of absurdism whereby the unresolvable conflict between Trelkovsky and the residents of the apartment building signify the peace and harmony that his life not only lacks but also would never be able to achieve. This uncertainty over how to categorize *The Tenant* places it in the realms of the uncanny and modernism. As categorization is problematic in both the uncanny and modernism, due to the borderline state of the former, which plays with the ideas of death and life, animate and inanimate etc., and the distortion of the line between reality and dream/imagination characteristic of the latter, *The Tenant* defies categorization and destabilizes exclusive classification.

On the other hand, Mazierska aptly observes that Polanski’s version of the absurd comes close to “Sartre’s notion of absurdity according to which everybody is in danger of leading an absurd life”; nevertheless, the absurd life is not consequent upon their free choice (44). This imposition of an absurd life is evident in *The Tenant* in particular. The absurd in this film is not depicted as an implication of the meaninglessness of the world as proposed by Albert Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. While Camus defines the absurd world as a world “suddenly divested of illusions and lights” in which “man feels an alien, a stranger” (6), the Polanskian absurd universe is not “suddenly,” but gradually, rendered meaningless. The absurdity is externally created and subtly imposed on the characters. The absurd is the world rendered meaningless for one who is perceived as the other, the outsider, the foreigner. It is indeed an uncanny meaninglessness. The absurd in this sense could not be more explicitly conveyed than in the dialogue between Wladyslaw Szpilman and Dorota in Polanski’s Oscar winning feature, *The Pianist*:

Wladyslaw Szpilman: It's an official decree, no Jews allowed in the parks.

Dorota: What, are you joking?

Wladyslaw Szpilman: No, I'm not. I would suggest we sit down on a bench, but that's also an official decree, no Jews allowed on benches.

Dorota: This is absurd.

Wladyslaw Szpilman: So, we should just stand here and talk, I don't think we're not allowed to do that.

Therefore, the absurd is one's perception of a world to which one does not belong, a world that does not have a place for one. It is a perception arguably imposed on one in the years during and after World War II, in particular in the occupied France of the early to mid-1940s, when one's place was no longer one's own for it was occupied. It is against this absurdity that existentialists emphasize the individuals' engagement within this senseless world and urge them to exert their freedom by embracing life and having an active participation in the world. Nevertheless, in Polanski's depiction of the absurd, the result of one's attempts to engage seems to be death.

Moreover, Camus describes one's consciousness of the absurd as the sudden realization that

the stage sets collapse. Rising, streetcar, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, streetcar, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm—this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the “why” arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement. “Begins”—this is important. Weariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness. It awakens consciousness and provokes what follows. What follows is the gradual return into the chain or it is the definitive awakening. At the end of the awakening comes, in time, the consequence: suicide or recovery. (12-13)⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the phraseology that Camus here uses to describe the absurd and one's consciousness of it, e.g. weariness occurring at the end of a mechanical life, the inauguration of the impulse of consciousness, could suggest that the absurd is not necessarily a sudden phenomenon but one that arises gradually, which could potentially be aligned with the absurdism in *The Tenant* that occurs gradually and thus evokes the feeling of the uncanny.

However, Camus rejects suicide as an answer to the problem of the absurd. His rejection of suicide as a logical alternative to life's absurdity is another point on which Polanski's filmic narrative of the absurd differs. Although suicide may not settle the problem of absurdity for others, it does so at a personal level for "the feeling of absurdity is a private concern of each individual." Hence, suicide could function as a personal solution to the question of absurdity even though it "merely indicates resigned acceptance of the harsh implications of the relationship between the individual and the world and not the overcoming of this absurd" (Golomb 125). The suicide of Trelkovsky -while it could be seen as an act expected to happen only to complete his transformation into Simone Choule- could also signify the only alternative through which he could assert his freedom. As Szasz notes in his preface to his discussion of the ethical and political views on suicide, suicide "is a choice intrinsic to human existence. It is our ultimate, fatal freedom" (ix). Suicide, as a choice pregnant with the possibility of freedom, gains more significance and urgency in an intolerable situation. Alvarez mentions various examples in history in which suicide was chosen because it would free the individual/individuals from an existence that was humiliating and unbearable:

hundreds of Jews put themselves to death at Masada rather than submitting to the Roman legions ... the history of the Spanish conquest of the New World is one of deliberate genocide in which the native inhabitants themselves cooperated. Their treatment at the hands of the Spaniards was so cruel that the Indians killed themselves by the thousand rather than endure it ... The first of all literary suicides, that of Oedipus' mother, Jocasta, is made to seem praiseworthy, an honorable way out of an insufferable situation. (57-58)

Accordingly, taking account of Trelkovsky's inferior status in his apartment building and in the larger society of France because he is not a French native, his total isolation from his acquaintances, and his inability to exert any degree of authority in his relationships with others, his act of suicide could then be taken as his final attempt not only to exercise his authority, even if it means only over his own death, but also to free himself from his insufferable situation in which he feels he is trapped. In fact, his suicide gives him the opportunity to tell his neighbors -loud and clear- that he is Trelkovsky and not Simone

Choule. In this sense, his suicide functions as the fatal vehicle through which he can declare his identity as Trelkovsky -at least and only to himself. In addition, one could draw an analogy between Trelkovsky and the character of Kirilov in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*, who, after his decision to commit suicide, says "I shall kill myself in order to assert my insubordination, my new and dreadful liberty." If indeed, as Camus describes it, Kirilov's act of suicide is "no longer a question of revenge, but of revolt" (106), Trelkovsky's act of suicide could, likewise, be seen as his revolt against the humiliation and stigmatization that he had continually been subject to. Hence, suicide -as an attempt to exert authority over death- also functions as an attempt to control humiliation by taking it to its final conclusion, an end that is preceded by and conditioned upon a state of utter humiliation: feminization.

Furthermore, Trelkovsky's doubling with Simone Choule could indeed be seen in the light of the rejection of the self that failed in its attempts to fit into a society that is hostile and unwelcoming towards it. Accordingly, Ain-Krupa argues that Trelkovsky adopts the identity of Simone Choule "as a channel for his own abandonment of self. He shuts out the male part of himself that has always strived to maintain order in his environment as well as within his psyche" (105). It is in this sense that the "abandonment of self" links doubling to suicide. Since doubling could be defined as a translation of the self outside the self, the suicide of the feminized Trelkovsky entails the death of the male Trelkovsky. Indeed, in order to eliminate his male self completely, that is "to kill both the Pole and the Frenchman" (108), he needs to commit the suicidal act twice. In addition, it might be worth noting that this possible need to repeat his suicidal jump twice reflects back on his reiterating his Polish origin in the police station as if to make sure that he is heard. It seems that he needed to repeat the act twice only to be able to make the scene noticeable, so that others would acknowledge him and his act. Hence, after his first jump, he stains the staircase with his blood as if marking his existence. Finally, Trelkovsky's suicide could be seen in the light of an act to defeat the double, in which sense an analogy could be drawn with Dr. Jekyll who finally has to commit suicide to obliterate Mr. Hyde. Nevertheless, the apparition of the double in the scene following his suicide renders futile this attempt. Finally, the circularity of the filmic narrative -one that is analogous to the ending of Polanski's rendition of *Macbeth*- and the presence of Egyptian motifs evoking

themes of reincarnation tie doubling to infinity and endless repetition. In this sense, doubling would require a doubling of suicide as well.

On the other hand, as Amit Marcus observes “[d]oppelgänger narratives typically end in a catastrophe, in which the double, the ‘original,’ or both are ruined” (192). This catastrophic ending is indeed prefigured by the apparition of Trelkovsky’s double. Since “the sight of the double freezes the self’s relationship to itself in an image and that stasis itself replicates death” (Coates, *Doubling, Distance and Identification* 17), the apparition of Trelkovsky’s double in his apartment looking at the original Trelkovsky indeed announces the imminence of death. Once Trelkovsky is in the bathroom, he sees his self, i.e. his double, looking at him through a pair of binoculars from his own room. If the double is “a self cast far away from itself” (155), the spatial distance between Trelkovsky and his double in this scene is later erased through their second encounter in the hospital when the latter seems to be within the former’s reaching distance. However, this proximity is obliterated and turned into an unbridgeable distance once more not only due to Trelkovsky’s inability to move a muscle, let alone stretch out a hand, but also because of the sense of remoteness inculcated through the mute atmosphere of the scene and the echoed voices of Trelkovsky and Stella. The nearing of distance between the doubles results in a grotesque scream, indeed an indication of the inherent horror of one’s encounter with the double. Furthermore, one could say that such simultaneous proximity and distance is indeed the “dreamlike” feature of the double’s image (75). Thus, if one were to take the final scene as not a diegetic reality, but a dream within the diegesis, it would signify the closeness and the distance associated with both dreams and doubles (75). This subtle blurring of the shift of register between reality and dream -in Wexman’s words the fact that “verisimilitude is qualified by fantasy” (13)- would characterize the film as a modernist work.⁴¹ However, there exist many features that would mark Polanski’s cinema and *The Tenant* in particular as postmodern. Caputo outlines several of

⁴¹ In addition, situating *The Tenant* within the modernist fashion aligns it with the uncanny as a common trope of modernist texts since “modernism is rooted in the uncanny” in that “modernist texts are suffused with tropes and instances of spectres, phantoms, ghouls, spirits, doppelgängers, galvanized corpses, etc.; the hint of an occulted order beneath the apparently random events of modern life was simply too tempting and gratifying to be ignored, however much it was disavowed” (Ross 42).

these features: Polanski's meticulousness in controlling the details of his films as an auteur, the interrelatedness and intertextuality among his films (52), his "disregard for the invented barriers that partition and ascribe 'genetic' proprietorship to culture in combination with his equal passion for both Camp and 'high' culture" (56), and the simultaneous affirmation and deconstruction of the individual psyche that is to be subsumed by "an external social order" (57). Thus, bearing features of both modernism and postmodernism, indeed Polanski's cinema can be located at "the 'cusp' of modernism and postmodernism" and in transition between the two (52).

It has been argued that Trelkovsky's scream is a pastiche of Munch's painting *The Scream* (Caputo 52). This analogy could be further strengthened by Coates' assertion that Munch's painting -one of the key images of modernism, subsequently ironized by postmodernism- is "[t]he most tactile, truly haptic art" whose "reverberating decibels" could erase the "distinction of outer and inner, actuality and projection" (*Doubling, Distance and Identification* 71). Trelkovsky's scream, retrospectively prefigured by Simone's, does, in fact, abolish this borderline, rendering not only the differentiation of reality and hallucination but the diagnosis of Trelkovsky's mental health, prospectively or respectively, nearly impossible. If this scream signifies the "interplay of modernism and post-modernism" (Caputo 52), the apparition of the double as its trigger exemplifies this association as it functions as the epitome of the "troubling of near-far distinctions" characteristic of both modernity and modernism (Coates 144). From another perspective, the scream could signify Trelkovsky/Simone Choule's horror at realizing the absurdity and the uncanny nature of having ended up in the very situation he/she had consciously decided to evade. In the uncanny, Paul Coates asserts that

one arrives where one began without knowing how one got there ... a seemingly rational conscious activity comes to seem uncontrolled, perhaps fulfilling unconscious directives. If for Freud, the uncanny means the return of a repressed familiarity, that return is also one of disavowed desires. (*Doubling, Distance and Identification* 135-6)

Should one take Trelkovsky's masking himself as Simone Choule as a conscious strategy to protect himself against the plot of his neighbours, then his scream could be due the terror of realizing that he has ended up in the very situation he was trying to escape from, his conscious act of pretense having turned into an actualization of his unconscious desires. Hence, it is possible to relate this conscious act of Trelkovsky and its unexpected, uncanny consequence to the "return ... of disavowed desires" (136) characteristic of the uncanny: his disavowed desires being his repressed urge to femininity.

Finally, it is possible to characterize the scream as an indication of an identification doubly failed. That is, not only is Trelkovsky unable to identify with a male double, but he is also unable to acknowledge and accept his transformed, feminized self. This scream, the consequence of an encounter with one's double, that figure whose appearance is the simultaneous harbinger of death and immortality through death (Rank, "The Double as Immortal Self" 76), also signifies the collapse of language to the pre-linguistic associated with the realm of the uncanny (Mamula 178); words' failure to express the terror is replaced with a high-decibel cry. This inability to utter any words indeed points to the role of the double as the appropriator of one's linguistic competence since "[t]he doubling of the self's image as an imaginary other is parallel with the doubling of its iterability, as another appropriates the license to speak in its stead as the grammatical subject of language" (Webber 55).

3.2 *Stiller*: The Moment of Truth

Among the major themes of *Stiller* is the biblical interdiction of making images of other people. This commandment, "Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen" ('Thou shalt not make any graven images') suggests "a plea for the authentic life and a rejection of the inauthentic life" (Cunliffe 113) since the image is by definition not the original reality while the idea of an authentic life -one that occupies a central position in Existentialism- requires an original project of self-definition and a release from images and impositions. One would reach authenticity should one be free from the socially construed images and norms:

Only when we successfully shed these values that we have been conditioned to uphold by various institutions—our families, schools and universities—will we be able to reach beyond them to the genuine roots of our selves and ultimately attain authenticity. The unnecessary information we have collected during our lifetimes, the ‘facts’ postulated as an integral part of the ethos of objectivity fostered by society and its institutions, are inapplicable to the sphere of human existence in which one struggles for one’s self. There, in their stead, the notion of authenticity emerges. (Golomb 1)

The authentic man, characterized as such, is indeed the Nietzschean “free spirit,” one who “thinks differently from what, on the basis of his origin, environment, his class and profession, or on the basis of the dominant views of his age, would have been expected of him” (*Human, All Too Human* 108). Considering such characterizations of the authentic and free man, Stiller’s life -at least before his escape to America- is marked by inauthenticity for it was a life determined by the various roles he had to play and different expectations he had to live up to. As Sandberg states:

Stiller had tried to craft a persona that fit and masked him, a futile effort that was accompanied by feelings of inferiority, self-inflation, and mediocrity. It is the others who form and formulate the image of Stiller, the sculptor. The others also indirectly expose the failures of his self-images and his botched attempts to craft a fitting form for himself. (132)

Hence, Stiller decides to abandon a life that bears no mark of authenticity. Indeed, as Golomb notes authenticity is a “negative term” in that it is defined and its presence is detected “in its absence, in the passionate search for it, in inauthenticity and in various acts of ‘bad faith’” (1). Upon his return to Switzerland, the narrator/Stiller once again faces the society’s obligation to conform to the expectations and images, and this time, he is condemned to be the old Stiller. Nevertheless, he seems to have attained a certain understanding of authenticity -that of self-definition through negation- when he writes

Ich weiß, daß ich nicht der verschollene Stiller bin. Und ich bin es auch nie gewesen. Ich schwöre es, auch wenn ich nicht weiß, wer ich sonst bin. Vielleicht

bin ich niemand. Und wenn sie es mir schwarz auf weiß beweisen können, daß von allen Menschen, die als geboren verbucht sind, zur Zeit nur ein einziger fehlt, nämlich Stiller, und daß ich überhaupt nicht in dieser Welt bin, wenn ich mich weigere, Stiller zu sein, so weigere ich mich doch. (334)

I know I am not the missing Stiller and I never was. I swear it, even if I do not know who else I am. Perhaps I am no one. And even if they can prove to me in black and white that of all people who are registered as having been born, only one is at present missing, Stiller, and that I am not in this world at all if I refuse to be Stiller, I shall still refuse. (287)

Nevertheless, one wonders if he could have actually remained James White -or anyone but Stiller- if he had not returned to Switzerland. Stiller's attempted suicide indicates the impossibility of such an endeavour. The narrator/Stiller describes his decision to commit suicide as one following reflection through time. He thus recounts that "[d]er Entschluß war alt. Dabei war ich, wie vermutlich die meisten Selbstmörder, überzeugt, daß es dann, wenn man es getan hat, einfach Schluß ist, Licht aus, Schluß der Vorstellung. Darin war ich, ohne Zweifel, insofern ohne Angst" (378) ('the decision was an old one. I was convinced, as probably most suicides are, that once it was done everything would be over, lights out, end of the performance. About this I had no doubt, and therefore no fear' (326)). Therefore, his attempted suicide seems to function as his last resort to free himself from the grip of his past/identity as Stiller. The fact that he took this decision on the fourth year after his flight and that he characterizes suicide as a way to end a performance suggest the possibility that he was unable to be anyone but Stiller in America even before his failed attempt at suicide. From another aspect, his suicide could be taken as an act to control death as an inevitable end. In his notes, the narrator/Stiller notes the inevitability of death: "Für jedes Lebensalter, ausgenommen das kindliche, bedeutet die Zeit ein gelindes Entsetzen, und doch wäre jedes Lebensalter schön, je weniger wir verleugnen oder verträumen, was ihm zukommt, denn auch der Tod, der uns einmal zukommt, läßt sich ja nicht verleugnen, nicht verträumen, nicht aufschieben" (350) ('at every age, apart from childhood, time is rather horrifying; and yet every age is beautiful the less we deny or dream away what belongs to it, for death itself, which will one day be our lot, cannot

be denied, or dreamed away, or postponed' (301)). Nevertheless, the inevitability of death does not mean that one cannot control its coming. As Slochower argues "[m]an is the only species which knows that death is inevitable. This makes it possible for him to *consciously plan* the taking of his own life. In this sense, one can say: To be human is to have the psychic power to *choose death*" (392). Moreover, one could characterize his suicide as implying bad faith, which grounds suicide "in an attempt to permanently escape the anguish of freedom and an indeterminate future" (Charme 450). As his attempted suicide promised an end of performance, his very decision to return to Switzerland could indicate his desire to be arrested, thus putting an end to the absurdity of flight and the endlessness of this Sisyphean project. Moreover, Probst argues that Kierkegaard's quotations preceding the novel suggest the impossibility of such an act.⁴² Thus, he argues that

man cannot escape himself and must learn to accept himself, which is the necessary complement and counterposition of the search for identity and, therefore, is as dominant in Frisch's work as the motif of image making. Man believes, Kierkegaard says, that he chooses himself, but he only realizes what had been in him. (156)

⁴² In fact, this assertion could also be supported by Max Frisch's regret at having included the epigraphs and the epilogue in the book, the insertion of which makes it possible to view Stiller's notes in the light of religion. In an interview with Jodi Daynard he stated that

The book was published and was already known. The book should have ended with the six notebooks by Stiller and not this epilogue written by the prosecutor—who is all of a sudden a writer, too. It's silly, isn't it? In the epilogue it gets more objective. Stiller knows that his notebooks are subjective, and then comes this Holy Ghost, the narrator. He takes the whole thing and puts it on a religious pillow. I don't feel comfortable with that. To defend myself, I will say that that was one of the very few times when I seriously tried to find out whether I could become religious or not. I was trying it out, you know. And as my other books showed, I couldn't retain it. I had started to read Kierkegaard because of this great feeling. I took a passage from Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* to use for the epigraph for I'm Not Stiller—and if I could change the book I would remove it. But at the time I was so happy to read in a few lines what I had tried to deliver over pages and pages.

In addition, Frisch's remark that he wanted to "try out" being a religious person indicates his closeness to Stiller. As Stiller tries out a new identity, so does Frisch perform religion via Kierkegaard.

Having failed in the project of self-acceptance, he ends up entrapped in the vicious circle of repetition which he considers to be his greatest fear (68) and from which he tries to flee: “alles in mir ist Flucht, Flucht ohne Hoffnung, irgendwohin zu kommen, lediglich aus Angst vor Wiederholung” (69) (‘everything within me is flight, flight without hope of getting anywhere, simply for fear of repetition’ (57)).,

Moreover, as mentioned above in the case of *The Tenant*, the social conditions of Europe after World War II made many authors interested in exploring existential themes in their works, such as the individual’s freedom, identity, death etc. The world after World War II was a world dominated and destroyed by death. This might have contributed to the centrality of the individual’s will to encounter death in order to achieve authenticity in the Existentialist thought. As Golomb notes “[o]ur deaths and, especially, our ways of dying are touchstones for our authenticity. For many of us, death is the most individual, genuinely true—and surely the only radical—action performed in our entire lives” (14). In such a world, Stiller’s assumption of a new identity and his attempted suicide could signify a wish to control death, thereby achieve authenticity.

Nevertheless, both his efforts fail; the former through being obliged to be the old Stiller and the latter through the malfunctioning of his little firearm. The disintegration of the narrator/Stiller’s assumed identity symbolically occurs during his visit to Stiller’s studio. When he is confronted with his stepfather, who recognizes him as his stepson, and when he sees “das gelassene Gesicht der schönen Julika, ihre kaum lächelnde Gewißheit” (374) (‘Julika’s cool, calm face and her scarcely smiling certainty’ (323)) that he is “her Stiller,” due to which he should be unable to throw anything at her, he takes out his fury and frustration on Stiller’s art pieces and tries to destroy Stiller’s sculptures. Nonetheless, he is unable to break the large pieces, whence the return of the familiar feeling of impotence and insufficiency:

ich fühlte eine Ohnmacht wie in bösen Träumen, eine Ohnmacht sondergleichen, so kräftig ich das Zeug auch schleuderte ... doch drohte schon die Blamage, daß meine Wut nicht ausreichen würde, alles zu zerschmettern, nur so das Kleine, während die größeren Arbeiten, weil ich sie nicht vom Sockel heben konnte,

meine Wut überdauern würden. Und diesen Hohn, worauf sie nur warteten, glaubte ich nicht ertragen zu können, ja, eigentlich war es nur noch meine Angst vor diesem Hohn, was mich weiter zu toben nötigte. (375)

I felt a nightmare impotence, an unparalleled impotence, however hard I threw the things ... I could already see the humiliating possibility that my rage would not be sufficient to smash everything, but only the smaller objects, while the larger works -because I couldn't lift them off their stands- would survive my fury. I felt I couldn't bear such a humiliation, which was all they were waiting for, and it was really fear of this humiliation that compelled me to go on wreaking havoc (323).

Having destroyed everything that would remind him of his past life, as Stiller continues to fail to assert being any man other than Stiller, he feels the tears he wanted to shed flowing inwards (325).⁴³ This could be marked as the moment of his certainty about the futility of trying to be a new individual. In Sandberg's words, "[t]his violent fit of rage can be read as triggered by Stiller's irrevocable insight that attempting to escape his old identity and making a fresh beginning free of the burden and guilt of the past is impossible" (132). One could consider his smallness and physical powerlessness to break the larger pieces -features suggesting femininity- as the return of the very femininity he had tried to repress by adopting the identity of the macho James White. Since the repressed always returns -as Freud suggests- Rolf, when he visits Stiller in Gilon, also notices the femininity of Stiller in his having "ein feminines Talent zur Anpassung" (400) ('a feminine gift of adaptability' (344)). Forced to reassume his identity as Stiller, the idea of his mortality rises up again. Stripped of the assumed recklessness and adventurousness of James White, he tells Rolf how cautious he has become: "Dabei bin

⁴³ "Einige Atemzüge lang, wie ich, das Feuerzeug noch in der Hand, meine Julika betrachte, glaube ich in heiße Tränen auszubrechen und im nächsten Augenblick auf meine Knie zu fallen, beide Hände vor dem Gesicht, bis Julika mein schluchzendes, häßliches, lächerliches Gesicht befreien wird. Ich möchte es, aber es geschieht nicht, es ist, als gingen die Tränen nach innen, und ich stehe unverwandelt wie sie (377) ('For a few seconds, as I looked at my Julika with the lighter still in my hand, I thought I should burst into scalding tears and the next moment fall on my knees with both hands over my face, until Julika freed my sobbing, ugly, ludicrous face. I should have liked to, but I didn't; it was as though the tears flowed inwards, and I stood there as unchanged as she' (325)).

ich jetzt die Vorsicht in Person, ich hänge am Leben wie noch nie, dann hat man immer so ein Gefühl, der Tod sei einem auf den Fersen, das ist natürlich, dieses Gefühl, ein Zeichen von Leben, weißt Du” (392) (‘I am now caution personified, I cling to life as never before, you see I always have the feeling death is on my heels -that’s quite natural, you know, a sign of life’ (337)).

From another aspect, it is worth mentioning the possible link between Stiller’s failure to shoot the enemy during the Spanish Civil War and the failure of his suicide attempt. The explanation that Stiller gives for his failure to his friends -whose inauthenticity the narrator/Stiller points out- is that when he saw the Fascist soldiers, he saw them “als Menschen, und es war ihm unmöglich, auf Menschen zu schießen, er konnte nicht. Punktum!” (141) (‘as human beings, and he found it impossible to shoot at human beings, he couldn’t do it’ (120)). He then fabricates the lie that the rifle had not gone off. Whereas about the failure of his suicide, he relates it to “rein technische Ursachen” (378) (‘purely technical causes’ (326)) in that the gun functioned at a lower pressure-point compared to his rifle, which he was used to. One wonders if the malfunctioning of the firearm is also a lie supposed to protect him from being characterized as impotent once again, as was the lie about its failure, in fact his own failure, as a soldier in the war. This assertion makes it possible to see the death of Jim White’s double in Carlsbald Cavern as his retrospective attempt to kill the impotent Stiller in a fictional realm. Nevertheless, as the death of the double signifies the death of the self, it suggests and foreshadows the disintegration of his new identity as “not Stiller.” In this sense, the mechanism of doubling as a substitute suicide also fails.

Nonetheless, upon his return to Switzerland, the narrator/Stiller tries to assert his identity as a new individual. Storytelling and writing become the vehicles through which he attempts to convey the truth of his being as “writing is an attempt to crystallize and articulate the authenticity of its creator. Therefore, the fictional worlds portrayed, in which different types of heroes are immersed in the search for their genuine selves, actually represent the real, existential predicaments of these authors, who, in confronting these issues, are trying to become authentic themselves” (Golomb15). In these stories, the narrator/Stiller is thus “confronting his past and his present in an attempt to establish a

new identity which he feels will free him from the leaden weight of the failures accruing to the Stiller whom everyone thinks they know ... his stories ... represent his efforts to demonstrate the truth of his assertion that he has changed” (Pender 78). However, these stories are double in the sense that while they define his truth, they undermine themselves by being endowed with an extent of romanticization and exaggeration that explicitly renders them fictitious, e.g. his melodramatic account of rescuing a mulatto girl from a burning sawmill. Nixon outlines the similarities one could draw between Samuel Beckett’s *Malone Dies* and Frisch’s *Stiller*. He emphasizes the protagonists’ fabrications of fictional tales not only to avoid talking about themselves, but also to convey their belief that it is not possible to tell one’s life story (324). This is a fact that the narrator/Stiller points out several times that “[m]an kann alles erzählen, nur nicht sein wirkliches Leben” (64) ([y]ou can put anything into words, except your own life’ (53)). Therefore, unable, or rather unwilling to speak about himself -for he wants to present an image of himself that stands as alien and as different as possible from that of Stiller- the narrator/Stiller represents himself through fictional characters and their fictional adventures, either attributing the experience to himself as James White -for example the murder of the mulatto girl’s husband in the desert- or identifying with them -for instance with the chemist Isidore. Since the hyperbolic nature of these adventures -and the fact that many of them are merely modified versions of famous folklore tales imbued with Stiller’s usual imagination suggest, early on, their fictitious nature, one might wonder if this exaggeration of the tales is the natural consequence of being under the effect of whisky, the consumption of which would give free rein to one’s imagination. On the one hand, one could argue that the consumption of alcohol would make the conditions favorable for Stiller’s fertile imagination. In this sense, the consequence of alcohol consumption -i.e. a romanticized imagination- reveals the hidden presence of Stiller behind the mask of James White. In addition, the fictitious nature of these tales is manifest on multiple levels. Firstly, they are told to the credulous warder Knobel, who seems to believe everything the narrator/Stiller says. Nevertheless, when the narrator/Stiller notices that Knobel is beginning to detect the falsity of his tales, thus his assumed identity, he becomes worried “Knobel, mein Wärter, wird eine Last. Wie ein Zeitungsleser wartet er auf die täglichen Fortsetzungen meiner Lebensgeschichte, wobei

mir sein Gedächtnis zu schaffen macht” (125) (‘Knobel, my warder, is becoming a nuisance. He waits like a magazine reader for the daily installments of my life story, and his memory is beginning to worry me’ (106)). Secondly, the narrator/Stiller’s comment that he is “Zu müde, um schon wieder einen Mord zu erzählen” (64) (‘[t]oo tired to make up another murder story’) discloses the fact that his tales are fabrications of an imaginative mind, indeed Stiller’s own imaginative mind.

On the other hand, one might find it curious that the narrator/Stiller’s first request for whisky follows his claim of not being Stiller. He writes:

Ich bin nicht Stiller! - Tag für Tag, seit meiner Einlieferung in dieses Gefängnis, das noch zu beschreiben sein wird, sage ich es, schwöre ich es und fordere Whisky, ansonst ich jede weitere Aussage verweigere. Denn ohne Whisky, ich hab's ja erfahren, bin ich nicht ich selbst, sondern neige dazu, allen möglichen guten Einflüssen zu erliegen und eine Rolle zu spielen, die ihnen so passen möchte. (9)

I am not Stiller! -Day after day, ever since I was put into this prison, which I shall describe in a minute, I have been saying it, swearing it, asking for whisky, and refusing to make any other statement. For experience has taught me that without whisky I’m not myself, I’m open to all sorts of good influences and liable to play the part they want me to play, although it’s not me at all. (5)

Accordingly, one might wonder if it is only through being under the logic debilitating effects of alcohol that the narrator/Stiller is able to deny being Stiller. His claim to have become a new person does not seem to be the result of an acceptance of one’s self with all of its shortcomings, thus of a conscious decision to become a new, and perhaps better version of the old self, but of an attempt to flee one’s past and failures. As his tale of Isidore suggests, the narrator/Stiller “is a returner, not a newcomer” (White, *The Reluctant Modernist* 202). In other words, although it becomes clear that the narrator/Stiller’s claimed identity as James White is -like the tales he recounts- but a fabrication, the fact that he insists he is not the man known to everyone as Stiller- despite all the irrefutable proofs, e.g. the undeniable and total similarity between him and the

photos of Stiller, might suggest a mere, superficial attempt to only deny the weaknesses of his nature and failures of his life and not an actual self-acceptance.

Moreover, according to Nietzsche, “[t]o ‘give style’ to one’s character -a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses that their nature has to offer and then fit them into an artistic plan until each appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye” (*The Gay Science* 163). In this sense, the narrator/Stiller- by not accepting his self -that is by rejecting “all the strengths and weaknesses that [his] nature has to offer” -fails in his project of self-recreation through the adoption of a new identity for indeed his logic is the logic of flight, not one of acceptance. Hence, the stylization of character remains but a rarity for him. The narrator/Stiller admits to the futility of this flight when he says “Es gibt keine Flucht. Ich weiß es und sage es mir täglich. Es gibt keine Flucht” (60) (‘It’s no good running away. I know that and keep repeating it to myself every day. It’s no good running away’ (50)). In fact, this is not limited only to the non-acceptance of his self as Stiller but extends to his failure to accept Julika the way she is. Thus, before his abandonment of Julika and his life in Switzerland, he constantly felt the need and tried to change her. He admitted this when he said to Julika at Davos that

Heute weiß ich es: im Grunde habe ich dich wahrscheinlich nie geliebt, ich war verliebt in deine Spröde, in deine Zerbrechlichkeit, in deine Stummheit, die es mir zur Aufgabe machte, dich zu deuten und auszusprechen. Was für eine Aufgabe! Ich bildete mir ein, du brauchst mich ... Dich zum Blühen zu bringen, eine Aufgabe, die niemand sonst übernommen hatte, das war mein schlichter Wahnsinn. Dich zum Blühen zu bringen! (146-147)

Today I know that, fundamentally, I never loved you: I was in love with your shyness, your fragility, your muteness, which set me the task of interpreting and expressing your thoughts. What a task! I imagined you needed me ... my crazy idea was to make you blossom out, a task no one else had undertaken. To make you blossom out! (124)

Furthermore, after the court's verdict condemning him to be Stiller, he seems to resume the same behavior towards her. For instance, he believes that Julika should stop teaching eurhythmics and insists that she should "sich wieder einer rein künstlerischen Arbeit widmen, in Lausanne eine eigene Ballettschule aufziehen" (403) ('devote herself to purely artistic work again and start a ballet school of her own at Lausanne' (346)). Accordingly, Koepke argues that the narrator

is not the Stiller that he once was and that the others insist on seeing in him. He is not Jim White, the American cowboy, either. However, his American experience did transform him to the point of a suicide attempt, a direct experience of death, and to the feeling of a rebirth, or a new lease on life. Although being a 'new' Stiller, he tries to make happen what the old Stiller failed to achieve: a perfect union between Julika and himself. His life has been a pattern of trying the impossible and overreaching himself. (49)

Moreover, one could argue that Stiller's life after being forced to be the old Stiller is an explicit indication of not only the failure of his attempts to become a new, different person, but also of the inefficacy of the defense mechanisms of projection and doubling with fictional characters of his tales and the fictional identity of James White. His personal life and social status after the court are more hopeless and helpless than those of Stiller before his flight to America. While the latter had the opportunity of trying to flee and start a new life -and even commit suicide as the last resort- the former has seen the failure of flight and suicide and has realized that one cannot simply erase one's past. Thus, for the newly old Stiller a second flight is out of the question. He is obliged to undergo the same miserable married life with Julika and seems to be more in need of Julika's affirmation and love compared to the time before his flight. For instance, when showing his pottery to Rolf, he tells Rolf "Diese flachen Schalen gefallen Julika noch am besten" (400) ('Julika likes these shallow bowls best' (344)). Nonetheless, Rolf does not take this remark at face value and notices his unfulfilled need to be appreciated and approved hidden underneath this statement:

Das hatte auf mäßige Anerkennung von Seiten seiner Frau schließen lassen, auf ein geringes Interesse oder gar Skepsis gegenüber seinen Versuchen, ja, der gute Stiller schien etwas zu vermissen, etwas wie Ermunterung, Kritik im Rahmen der Begeisterung; da unten im Souterrain hätte man meinen können, Frau Julika halte seine ganze Töpferei eigentlich für einen Humbug. (400)

This suggested a limited appreciation on his wife's part, a lack of interest or even scepticism regarding his endeavours, yes, the good Stiller seemed to miss something, something like encouragement, criticism within the framework of enthusiasm; down in the underground chamber one got the impression that Frau Julika really regarded his whole activity as a potter as nonsense. (344)

This observation could, to some extent, absolve Stiller of the sin he had committed against Julika, in having seen her as a dead woman, the consciousness of which, according to Rolf was "von keinem menschlichen Wort zu tilgende" (437) ('no human word would obliterate' (376)).

In addition, he has to accept "a deadening role as his actuality, not a role involving any aesthetic expression such as even sculpturing but an empty one like hollow potter, a role replete with repetition and cliché" (Bodine 137). In other words, he has ended up in the very situation he always dreaded, trapped in the vicious circle of repetition and uncreative solitude. Seeing Stiller's condition, Rolf wonders

Was macht der Mensch mit der Zeit seines Lebens? Die Frage war mir kaum bewußt, sie irritierte mich bloß. Wie hält dieser Stiller es aus, so ohne gesellschaftliche oder berufliche Wichtigkeiten gleichsam schutzlos vor dieser Frage zu sitzen? Er saß auf der verwitterten Balustrade, ein Knie emporgezogen, die Hände um dieses Knie geflochten; bei seinem Anblick konnte ich mir nicht vorstellen, wie er sein Dasein aushielt, ja, wie überhaupt ein Mensch, einmal seiner Erfahrung bewußt und also frei von allerlei nichtigen Erwartungen, sein Dasein aushält!... (398)

What does man do with the days of his life? I was scarcely aware of the question, it just irritated me. How could Stiller bear to face this question unprotected by affairs of social or professional importance, without any defences? He sat on the weather-worn balustrade, one knee drawn up and his hands clasped round it; when I looked at him I could not imagine how he could bear this existence, how any man could bear his existence once he has learnt from his experiences and is consequently free from vain expectations ... (342)

And indeed, one wonders how could anyone bear such existence. One could take Rolf's observation that though once Stiller "nur von sich selbst redete, wenn er von der Ehe ganz allgemein, von Negeren, von Vulkanen und weiß Gott wovon erzählte, so redete er jetzt von 'seinen' Töpfen, von 'seiner' Drehscheibe, von 'seiner' Glasur, von 'seiner' Könnerschaft sogar, ohne im mindesten von sich selbst zu reden" (399) ('had spoken only of himself when he talked about marriage in general, about Negroes, volcanoes, and heaven knows what else: now he talked about 'his' pots, 'his' wheel, 'his' glaze, even 'his' skill, without speaking of himself at all' (343)), as an indication that Stiller bears his existence by giving up existing for himself. His situation seems to suggest a nonexistence rather than an existence -let alone it being an authentic one. This might explain why he talks about his possessions rather than himself. Since he is no longer able to determine and characterize his existence, the fact that he possesses things might suggest that he really exists. At this point, it is worth considering the relationship of the novel to its epigraph taken from Kierkegaard's *Either/or*. In *Either/Or* Kierkegaard proposes two modalities of life: the aesthetic and the ethical -which would end in despair leaving one with only one option; leading a religious life. However, as Sophie Wenerscheid notes whether "the novel is read in accordance with Kierkegaard or not depends on to which extent one reads Stiller's development after having been released from prison as a turn towards the ethical-religious or if he remains in the world of aesthetics" (85). On the one hand, Stiller fails in his life as an aesthete by ending up in despair, thus his attempted suicide. On the other hand, his passive existence after the court's verdict does not characterize his life as one of the ethical which would require one to take full responsibility for and active participation in one's life. Hence, one could argue that Stiller could neither pursue the ethical/religious mode of living nor remain in the world of

aesthetics. He seems to be trapped between the two, a limbo indeed. However, Golomb finds the genuine either/or choice in Kierkegaard's *The Present Age*, not in choice between the aesthetic and ethical modalities of existence. He considers that the "real existential choice" is either "to become a selfless 'nothing at all', in the midst of the abstract collective 'public' and 'a deathly silence', or to become a genuine and concrete individual by committing the 'leap of enthusiasm', the 'leap into the arms of God'—either to embrace the authentic faith or to become a two-dimensional phantom" (25). Accordingly, Stiller's existence, marked by his silence and humble life, is one of the leveling of selfhood. However, one could indeed discern some degree of authenticity in Stiller's life after the court's verdict, for silence and passivity could also indicate a self-defined modality of life, though one whose authenticity is not the religious kind proposed by Kierkegaard. In addition, in his state, one could perceive the rejection of the self in a different guise than the one he had adopted after his return to Switzerland. There seems to be no need for doubling as he continues to deny his self through his silence and his occupation as a potter, both of which lack the romantic imagination Stiller was characterized with.

Conclusion

The three chapters of this study are respectively entitled: The Conflict, The Defense and The Failure, for each highlights the dynamics of its title. In chapter one, the argument addressed the existing conflict between the protagonists' conceptions of their identities and the identities their societies imposed on and expected of them. Possible causes of this conflict were suggested including the introjection of conflicting images that would potentially place the individual in the limbo of femininity and masculinity, the isolation of the individual through stigmatization and humiliation, the various opposing societal roles one is expected to play, and the forces of a conformist society. The consequences of these conflicts were also considered such as transvestism, delusion and psychotic breakdown, a state of bad faith, feelings of failure, impotence and inadequacy.

In chapter two, the possible defense mechanisms the protagonists adopted against the external force (re)constructing their identities were considered. These defense mechanisms were arguably doubling and projection. Considering that the protagonists were split personality characters, the various layers of doubling were discussed. The significance of the double was considered in terms of its being the announcer of the death and the disintegration of the individual's identity, as the externalization of the undesirable features of the individual, as the figure of the individual's alienation of the self and the by-product of the individual's state of bad faith. Finally, the dual relationship of solitude and doubling was noted. While one's encounter with the double reinforces one's sense of solitude, that very solitude triggers one's doubling.

In chapter three, the failure of the protagonists' resistance against the external assaults on their identities and the absurdist and existentialist features of the two works were explored. The suicide/attempted suicide of the protagonists were taken as indications of the failure of their attempts to secure a personally defined space of subjective identity. In addition, the various, potential interpretations of their acts of suicide/attempted suicide were suggested including suicide as an expression of one's existential freedom, as an attempt to control one's death and consequently one's identity and as a final measure to defeat the double. It was also noted how the disintegration of the protagonists' identities

was foreshadowed: in the doubleness of the narrator/Stiller's notes and the apparition/death of the double.

Drawing any conclusions on Max Frisch's oeuvre- on *Stiller* in particular -and Polanski's cinema- on *The Tenant* specifically -would entitle so much uncertainty, due to the multi-layered, ambiguous and contradictory nature of their works, that would render unsatisfactory any attempt to do so. Nevertheless, this study has been an attempt to unveil the intricacies and complexities with which Polanski and Frisch have treated the issue of identity in *The Tenant* and *Stiller*. However, I must admit that the ambiguity of this issue -much like the ambiguity of the endings of both works- still remains. It is indeed due to these very intricacies and complexities that various motifs in the two works require multiple interpretations and acquire multivalent significance.

Though numerous studies have been carried out on Polanski's cinema and literary works of Max Frisch, still much remains to be done to acknowledge and illuminate the layers of hidden, or rather masked, meanings in their oeuvre. As the conflict between the individual and society constitutes a major motif in both Polanski's cinema and Frisch's literary works, a comparative study considering various films of the former and novels and plays of the latter would indeed yield fruitful results, which would help disclose the nuances of this motif, its delineation and consequences on a larger scale.

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